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by

FRANCES WESTON CARRUTH

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SHE SHOOK A WIRE CAGE ENERGETICALLY OVER THE COALS

Those Dale Girls

BY

Frances Weston Carruth

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

—*Longfellow.*

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A. C. McClurg & Co.
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MY SISTER AND COMRADE, THE BRAVEST
OF SOLDIER GIRLS

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THOSE DALE GIRLS

CHAPTER I

"JULIE DALE, you're the laziest thing in creation! Come down from that window-seat and help."

"Can't, my dear," a gay young voice responded. "I'm as 'comfy as comfy can be.'"

"Look at her, Peter Snooks," said Hester to a fox-terrier at her side; "just look at her! She's curled up in a heap, reveling in that fascinating Kipling, with her mouth all screwed up for this popcorn, which she thinks we will take in state to her ladyship. But we'll fool her—eh, Snooks? We'll fool her completely. We'll just sit complacently on the floor and eat it all up ourselves."

The dog jumped about rapturously. The girl, who was kneeling before an open fire, shook a wire cage energetically over the coals, and watched the corn burst into great white flakes.

"It does *smell* delicious," came in an insinuating tone from the window-seat across the room.

Hester maintained a lofty silence, and tipping

the corn into a bowl, sprinkled it with salt, adding dabs of butter. She then tossed a piece to the dog, and began to sample it herself with apparent satisfaction, for she smacked her lips and said, reflectively, as she put her hands to her burning cheeks: "I believe it is quite worth ruining my complexion over."

Suddenly she whisked up bowl and dog, and crossing the room, dropped both on the seat beside her sister. "There!" she exclaimed, "you knew I would never eat it alone, even if you are a duffer!"

"'Duffer' is most inelegant" (this from Julie in an assumption of stern reproach); "I do not see wherever you picked up such a word."

"Read it in a book," quoted Hester, laughing. This was a joke of long standing between them—to hold literature responsible for any suspicious scraps of knowledge. It was a phrase they used also with much frequency in argument, particularly when the subject was beyond the range of their experience. "Don't know a thing about it, read it in a book," one of them would say facetiously, by way of backing up some remarkable statement, and feel herself at once relieved from personal responsibility.

"You need not put on such frills," Hester now said to her sister. "You know you adore slang yourself."

Julie was gazing out of the window. "Look, Hester, quick! There go the crew! How they are skimming down the river! I'd no idea they trained out here, had you?"

Both girls watched intently as the narrow shell shot by, the men pulling the long, steady stroke which was the pride of their university.

"Aren't they splendid?" Hester exclaimed, enthusiastically. "I wish we knew some of the college men, Julie, don't you?"

"It would be fun. I'd like to see something of college life. Perhaps we may meet an occasional senior if Miss Ware takes us about any this winter."

"Do you suppose he'd be nice?" inquired Hester, quizzically. "I don't think we know much about very young men, do you? All we've known have been so much older than we are."

Julie puckered up her forehead and gazed after the vanishing crew. She was trying to classify an unknown species.

"It does seem odd," continued Hester, "*our* contemplating formal society, doesn't it? I believe I shall hate it. We have roamed around with Daddy too much to be quite like pattern society girls."

"I tell you what we'll do, Hester; we'll go out with Miss Ware, meet loads of people and

pick out a nice congenial few whom Dad will like, too, and just cultivate them informally. You know how Dad dislikes society in the conventional sense, but he wants us to take our proper place; and of course we ought to know people, now that we have really settled down in Radnor to live."

"Heavens! but you're clever, Julie! We might set up a salon; only the wise, the witty and the beautiful need apply. Which class would we come under ourselves, do you think? We can begin with Dr. Ware and all the old dears—only he never seems old a bit—that Dad is always bringing home to dinner, and add any new dears we meet and think eligible."

Julie laughed. "It sounds like a herd or something." Then, with sudden gravity, she said: "Hester, dear, I'm anxious about Dad. I can't just explain it, but somehow he's been different ever since we've been here. Haven't you noticed how preoccupied he is and tired all the time, so unlike Dad? The other day I spoke to him about it, and he shook his head and said I mustn't be so observant, that he happened to have an unusual stress of business, that was all. But I don't know," she continued, meditatively; "I can't seem to throw off this queer feeling about him."

Hester regarded her with wide-open eyes.

"You frighten me, Julie." Then leaning toward her sister, she shook her finger admonishingly. "How dare you go on having worries by yourself and not letting me know a thing about them?" she said, lightly. "I think it is all your imagination. I dare say Daddy has heaps of extra things on his hands because of all the time he spent gadding with us in Europe. Of course, that's it, you goosey," the idea gaining strength in her mind, "*of course.* You and I and Peter Snooks must be more amusing, and make him laugh and forget the 'stress of business.' Ugh! what a horrid expression that is! Now I think of it, he hasn't laughed lately, Julie, has he?" She looked up with an evident desire to be contradicted

Julie shook her head.

Hester sprang up from her seat, and seizing the dog by the forepaws, danced him violently about the room. "We need a shaking up, Peter Snooks, or we'll not be allowed to jingle our bells any longer at the court of his majesty Dad the Great! Who ever heard of jesters neglecting their duties! His royal highness must laugh," she said gayly, "or he'll cry, 'Off with their heads!' like Alice's fierce old queen." She emphasized this possible calamity by swinging the dog up in the air and herself executing a daring *pas seul* before she dropped breathless in a

chair. "I had rather die than be stupid, hadn't you, Julie?" she gasped, between breaths.

"In that case I think you will be spared to us a while yet," replied her sister, with quiet humor.

"So glad you think we're a success," Hester said, cheerfully. "Peter Snooks, do you hear? we're a success—she approves!" The dog lay panting on the floor, and wagged his tail in understanding of the compliment. "We'll give a private exhibition to his majesty to-night after dinner. How he will laugh! We will elaborate this feeble effort and call it 'The Dance of Joy.' Things are always more interesting with names," she said, decisively. "Julie, you be showman and introduce us."

Julie took her cue immediately, and rising, bowed low. "Ladies and gentlemen (that means Dad)—ladies and gentlemen, I shall now have the honor of presenting to your astonished vision the wonderful and original 'Dance of Joy'—"

The library door opened suddenly, and a middle-aged woman entered and closed the door after her. She stopped just inside the threshold, and looking from one to the other with a scared face, stood wringing her hands helplessly.

"Good gracious! what is the matter, Bridget?" Julie ejaculated. "Tell us—you look frightened to death."

The woman opened her lips and closed them with a moan. No word escaped her.

Both girls were beside her in an instant, and Julie gave her a little shake.

"Is it Daddy? What has happened? Bridget, Bridget, speak!" Her beseeching young voice cried out with instinctive fear.

"They're bringing him in," Bridget gasped at last. "He took sick in the office with a stroke. Dr. Ware's with them. He sez you're not to see him yet. He sez I'm to keep you in here till he comes—the Doctor, I mean." Her words came in a tumult of confusion.

"Is—he—dead?" Julie asked. "Bridget, tell me the truth."

It seemed to the girls that they lived an eternity in the second before the woman said: "No, no, he's not dead. Whatever made you say such a fearful thing?" She buried her face in her apron and wept bitterly. "He's tired out and sick altogether, the dear man. I've seen it comin' this long time."

Hester looked at Julie with a sort of awe. The sound of footsteps in the hall outside penetrated with ominous distinctness into the library.

Julie said tremulously, "Hester, dear, I am going to Dad; they shall not keep us away."

"No, they shall not. We are not babies; we must go and help."

"That's what I wus after tellin' the Doctor you'd say," Bridget sobbed, "an' it's not for me to be lavin' you here all alone, an' me all over the house to onct. But if yez wouldn't go now, darlin's. Just wait till he's took to his room, an' 'twould be better—indeed, believe your old Bridget, it would!"

The impetuosity of youth in the shock of joy or sorrow is not to be checked. The girls went into the hall, to see a stretcher, on which lay their father, being borne up the stairs, while Dr. Ware and two men, who proved to be trained nurses, brought up the rear of the little procession.

"Dr. Ware," whispered the girls, slipping up close to him with blanched faces, "we know—we must help, too."

He took them each by the hand, as if they were little children, and turned them back before they could reach their father's side.

"Dear little girls," he said, gently, "you can help your father most by doing as I ask. It is hard to be shut out, I know, but you can do nothing now. Later, perhaps, you can do—everything. I will tell you frankly, he is a very sick man. I have no wish to hide anything from you, but we shall try and get him better—much. I have two experienced men, and Bridget here, and when we get him comfortably in bed

you may come in for a moment. He may not regain consciousness for many hours. Will you trust me and be guided by my better judgment?" looking down at them earnestly.

"Yes, yes," they both sobbed through the tears, now falling fast; "go to Dad—don't think of us. We will do everything you say."

"That pleases me—my brave little girls." He went on into Mr. Dale's chamber.

Left to themselves, they huddled together outside their father's door, each trying to comfort the other. Peter Snooks, fully conscious that his young mistresses were in trouble, climbed into Julie's lap and stuck his wet nose into her hand in true canine sympathy. Though they did not put it into words, both girls were conscious of a curious sense of remoteness from their father in being thus kept from him. This immediate, poignant grief stung them bitterly and prevented for the moment any thought of what the future might hold.

They never knew how long they had sat there on the stairs when Dr. Ware opened the bedroom door and beckoned them in. But they carried ever after a vivid impression of creeping stealthily to their father's bed, stooping to kiss the dear face, from which there was no answering sign of recognition, and stealing softly out again. And in Julie's mind there flashed always an

accompanying picture—the remembrance of how, when they had reached the hall again, Hester had picked up a woe-begone, shivering little dog, and burying her face in his neck, whispered, brokenly: "Oh, Peter Snooks, how we were going—to—make—him—laugh!"

CHAPTER II

IT was said of Mr. Dale by those of his friends' wives who felt at liberty to discuss his affairs with their husbands, that his bringing up of his daughters was radically wrong. These whispers of feminine disapproval were occasionally wafted to the seemingly heedless father, who always smiled good-naturedly, yet was apparently blind to the advantages to be derived from the conventional course of training the young, for he continued to pursue his own methods with bland serenity.

Mrs. Dale had died when the girls were six and seven years old respectively. Up to that time they had lived quite like other children, going regularly to school and finding recreation in the pleasures common to their age and condition. The house in which at that time they lived was a somewhat pretentious mansion on the water side of Crana Street. Now to live in this sacred precinct, as every one in Radnor knows, gives an immediate claim to distinction. In the eyes of their neighbors, however, the Dales were not distinguished beyond the matter of their locality,

for the family was not Radnor-bred, and this is an offense tolerated but never condoned in Radnor society.

The Dales had drifted there from some unheard-of (to Radnor) western town soon after the Civil War, while the country was still in a state of upheaval. Major Dale brought to the readjustment of his business the force and skill which won for him distinction on the battlefield, gradually transferred his interests from the western town eastward, and took root in Radnor, where he proceeded to build up a fortune. Not there, however, but back in Mrs. Dale's old home, some years later, the girls were born. They came to Radnor as babies, and like their father took root; but Mrs. Dale, a semi-invalid, spent much of her time wearily traversing the country in search of health. She disliked Radnor, and made no attempt to cultivate the people. During her prolonged absences the children remained at home under the care of Bridget, a faithful servant who had come with them from the west.

With Mrs. Dale's death the quiet placidity of the children's life ceased. The house was closed, and Mr. Dale started immediately for California, taking the girls and Bridget with him. While there he became interested in railroad enterprises, which eventually extended through remote and varied sections of the country and

kept him a bird of passage for many years. He built a private car and took his daughters everywhere with him, to the consternation of Radnor, which was kept informed of the magnate's movements through the medium of the press.

The girls grew up in an atmosphere of devoted companionship, among scenes that were ever changing. They lived much in hotels, and for weeks at a time in their private car, "The Hustle," which they never ceased to regard as a fascinating playhouse, and where their father, in the midst of his multitudinous cares, found time to watch their developing natures and teach them to grow in grace and spirit, as became the daughters of a soldier.

They were not wholly without lessons, for when they remained for any length of time in one place Mr. Dale's private secretary was dispatched to find a good school, in which they were immediately placed; while Mr. Dale, who had theories of his own, trained their eyes to keen observation of what they saw and their minds to reason out the obscure according to their own lights. He was full of wisdom and patience and counsel, but he had a way of turning on them when they came for advice and saying, "What do *you* think?" in a manner that would have been startling to the average child, who is apt to think what he is told. This turn-

ing the tables began in their teens, whereby they came to have opinions without being opinionated, for, though requiring them to think out every subject carefully, he yet guided them with a firm hand, giving them in every sort of discussion the wisdom of his wide experience. He was a loving, indulgent father, and the girls adored him, but no sterner disciplinarian ever held sway. Implicit and immediate obedience he demanded—no questioning of his higher authority.

He taught them, too, much of the old-world philosophy, which he had imbibed from extensive reading. They listened to him wonderingly, their eager young minds drinking in the beauty of what he said, but failing at that age to grasp the breadth and depth of all the truths he told them. Sometimes he almost forgot that they were children.

When Julie was twenty and Hester nineteen he took them to Europe. Bridget and Peter Snooks completed the party. They roamed about for a year, and just before they were to sail for home late in the summer Mr. Dale informed the girls that he intended to sell out his large railroad interests; he was tired of their unsettled life, and thought they would all enjoy the novelty of opening their house and taking up their abode in Radnor. Radnor had long ceased to be anything more than a name to the girls, but the

proposition opened up joyous possibilities of "making a home for Dad."

"I will take you down to Cousin Nancy's in Virginia when we land," he had said to them in London, "and leave you there a few weeks; she has been begging for a visit from us this long while. Bridget and I will open the house in Radnor and get everything in order; then you can come up and run the establishment and queen it over your old Dad in royal fashion."

This program had been successfully carried out, except that it could scarcely be said that the girls ran the establishment, for the responsibility lay with Bridget, who assumed the duties of housekeeper—duties she guarded jealously and performed with such skill that there was not a better managed house on the water side of Crana Street. This Radnor people knew through that mysterious agency by which a neighborhood keeps in touch with itself.

After years spent in the narrow confines of a car, however luxurious, and the necessarily limited quarters of hotels, the girls reveled in the spacious house, over which they spread themselves in an amusing fashion, sleeping in turn in the various bedrooms by way of getting acquainted with them all over again, Julie said, and with reckless prodigality hanging some portion of their wardrobe in every closet in the house.

At the end of their first week in Radnor, Hester amused her father by telling him she thought she should enjoy housekeeping exceedingly if they had an elevator, a menu and "The Hustle" side-tracked in the back yard. Reluctantly she admitted that the yard could scarcely be made to hold it, but at least, she suggested airily, he might build a float and anchor the car at their back door on the river. The new life really seemed to her incomplete without it.

Hester at twenty was a laughing, dancing sprite, yet with a certain quaintness and mature-ness of mind that amused and delighted her father's friends. She was slim and dark, with a piquant face and fascinating hazel eyes that shot out mischievous lights. They were unusual eyes, and very beautiful with their fringe of long dark lashes; but she did not think so, and compared them scornfully to a cat's—the only animal she hated. If she could be said to have any vanity it was for her hands, which came in for a considerable share of her attention, and she went to bed in gloves every night of her life.

Julie, whose hands were not a matter of comment, dispensed with this bed-time ceremony, and usually devoted most of her time before retiring to a vigorous brushing of her rebellious yellow hair, which, when it was let alone, rioted

all over her head in such babyish curls that her father always called her "Curly Locks." Her eyes were violet—her lashes and brows dark, like Hester's, which gave her a most remarkable contrast of coloring. From her mother she had inherited a delicate constitution, and lacked the buoyancy of Hester's gay spirits; nevertheless, she had a keen sense of humor and laughed immoderately on all occasions at her sister, whom she considered altogether the cleverest and most amusing person she knew. And they knew many delightful people from one end of the country to the other—everywhere except in Radnor, where society was waiting for Mr. Dale formally to present his daughters before setting the seal of its approval upon them.

The second day following that on which Mr. Dale was brought home ill, Dr. Ware stayed longer than usual with his patient and came out of the sickroom with a grave face. In the hall the girls were waiting for him as usual.

"My dears," he said, abruptly, drawing them into the library, "you have to know the worst, and there is no one but me to tell you." For a moment he hesitated. "Your father's illness is caused by his financial ruin—his entire fortune has been swept away. He has lost everything, and the shock of his failure has paralyzed him."

For a moment neither spoke; each girl felt that she could hear her heart beat in the awful silence of the room. Then Julie said:

"Won't Daddy soon be better? Oh, you can't mean he will always be sick like this?" Her eyes were black with pain and apprehension.

"He will never move about again. Physically he may suffer very little; the anguish will come through the consciousness of his helplessness—"

"We will not let him feel that," interrupted Julie, throwing up her head. "Hester and I are strong."

The Doctor cleared his throat. "Thank God for that, for you've a hard fight ahead of you."

Hester crept close to his side. "Will you tell us more about it, please," she whispered in a strange, tense voice; "it's so—so difficult to understand."

"Of course it is, dear," putting his arm around her. "Things began to go wrong a year ago. Your father felt it, and nearly abandoned the European trip, then went after all, feeling absolute need of rest and hoping he had left the snarl sufficiently straightened out to go on without him. But things went from bad to worse, and he came back to more complications than any one man could manage. Even then he might have pulled through somehow if that western road in which he had so largely invested

had not smashed and carried him down with it. You don't want the details, Hester."

"No," she answered, "it is enough that the thing is."

He looked at her intently, as if astonished that so philosophic a statement should come from so young a person.

"Shall we have to give up the house, and— and 'The Hustle,' and — everything?" asked Julie.

"I'm afraid so, Julie dear. That is especially what I want to talk to you about to-day—your future. I want you to leave it all to me."

"Oh, no, no!" she cried, "you're good, so good, but we can't do that. We must look the future squarely in the face, and bravely, must we not, Hester?" turning appealingly to her sister. "I'm sure that is what Daddy would say."

"Julie, don't you be afraid; we'll just do everything—somehow!" Hester flung out her young arms with a sweeping movement as if she meant to gather in all their perplexities and conquer them. "If Dr. Ware will help us and advise us, we'll try to get our feet down on something—somewhere. Yours aren't very big," she said, with a piteous attempt at her old lightness, "but mine are. I feel just now as if I were standing on my head, it is all so sudden and so terrible!"

Dr. Ware rose and put on his coat. "I think you have heard enough for one day," he said. "You seem to be such surprisingly independent young women that I do not know just how I am going to deal with you. But you are to remember this, mind, that whatever I have is yours—everything—though I shall not thrust it upon you. If you have ideas of your own and wish to carry them out, I will help you in every way in my power. Now I am off," he added, briskly, "and don't you worry too much. We have many days yet to talk things over and decide what is best to do."

Julie tried to say something, but ended by burying her face in his coat sleeve and sobbing quietly.

Hester fiercely bit her lip and gulped down the tears that threatened to choke her. "You are the kindest, best—" she began.

"Tut, tut, nonsense!" said the Doctor. "Not a word like that, or I shall desert you entirely." And with a frown on his face that was half a smile he left the room.

CHAPTER III

"JULIE, it is too absolutely appalling to realize!" Hester pressed her nose against the window and looked out over the river dejectedly. A fresh September gale was blowing, ruffling the surface of the water into miniature waves and rattling the window panes with a suggestion of autumn days to come. Julie shivered a little, and crossed to the fireplace, where a few pine logs sputtered on the hearth. She looked down without seeing them. Her thoughts were turned within.

"Julie! do say something!" exclaimed her sister. "I can't bear to have you so still."

"I am thinking, dear; trying to grasp what it all means."

"Julie, what can we do?"

"Do? Well, we will do something."

"Of course we will, old girl." Hester left the window, and crossing the room put her arms around her sister. "The two main things are to take care of Dad and earn our own living. We couldn't be dependent on Dr. Ware, Julie. Do you suppose he meant he wanted to give us a home and everything?"

"I don't know, Hester. He is so generous and so fond of Dad I believe he would; but that would not be right. I wonder what we can do to be self-supporting? We have the usual accomplishments, and I suppose we have average intelligence, don't you?" she asked, anxiously.

"I would back the intelligence against the accomplishments any day," said Hester, sagely. "We have not had the usual sort of bringing up, so we can't do the usual thing."

"Like teaching, you mean, or—or things like that? No, we can't. We are not trained or qualified for any sort of position, and only one of us could work away from home anyway, for we can't both leave Daddy."

Hester's forehead was creased into little wrinkles of perplexity. "If only I were a man!" she exclaimed, "I might stand some chance—I know how to do such a lot of mannish things. Why, I could be an engineer if I were put to it, Julie! You know I've run the engine attached to 'The Hustle' many a time; the men used to let me do it." She drew in her breath with a little gasp of remembrance. "As it is," she continued, "I suppose I'll have to be a companion or something equally commonplace and ladylike," she ended in a tone of disgust.

"I suppose so," agreed her sister reluctantly;

"but, dear, the worst of that is it will separate us, and I don't believe either one of us could stand that." Julie's lip quivered. "Isn't it humiliating to have such a feeling of utter helplessness?"

"Yes, it is." Hester gave herself a shake. "I cannot seem to take it all in yet, Julie—what it all means. It seems to me we must be some other girls talking, not ourselves at all. Somehow it never entered my mind that dreadful things could happen to us—not while we had Dad to take care of us."

"But that is just it now, Hester dear; we haven't Dad to take care of us—it is we who must take care of him."

"We'll do it, too," said Hester, with a ring in her voice. "I'm going down now to the kitchen to see about making him some wine jelly. Bridget said she did not believe Dr. Ware would let him eat it, but I feel as if I must be doing something. Come, Peter Snooks," to the dog that was never far out of sight, "we'll at least make a pretense of being useful. Now don't you sit there and cry," she said from the door to her sister. "You just hold tight on to yourself, and think out something clever—I'm sure you can," convincingly.

Julie acknowledged this flattery by a wan little smile, and following Hester out of the

room, went in to see her father. The nurse was sitting near the bed, but moved aside as she entered.

Mr. Dale partially opened his eyes as his daughter drew near, but closed them again instantly. His drawn, haggard face showed the strain he had undergone in the months before the final collapse of his business had stricken him down. A look of tender pity came into Julie's face as she knelt by the bed and laid her hand over his. He was breathing heavily, as if asleep, and she dared not speak. It seemed to her inconceivable that her bright, energetic father could be lying there as helpless as a little child! She put her head down on the bed, while her mind reverted to their recent conversation with Dr. Ware and the subsequent talk which had half stunned their senses. They must think, Hester said, and she was right; but it almost seemed to her it would be a relief to stop thinking for a moment, so rapidly had the events of the past two days been crowded in upon them.

All this passed through her mind in a tumult of confused ideas, through which ran the predominating thought of work, in obtaining which she knew Dr. Ware would help them. But how, and what and where? In the first shock of their trouble it was not possible to see the way clearly, nor, indeed, to half understand the problems

confronting them. Julie felt this and knew she must be patient, though inwardly a wave of resentment that such things should be, surged in her heart rebelliously. The next instant she thrust down this feeling with a fierce determination to control herself, and spreading out her hands, for the first time in her life regarded them critically. They were not beautiful, like Hester's, but they were slender and white, and she suddenly felt a contempt for their delicacy, while a consciousness that she had never exacted anything from them caused her to view them in a new light. Why not work with her hands! Why not put her fingers to some use and see what they were capable of, making each one a vital thing full of strength and character. The idea delighted her, and she closed her fingers in a tight grip as if testing their possibilities. "Oh, Daddy, dear!" she half whispered, with her head pressed close against him, "we will amount to *something*." Then rising from the bed, she stooped to kiss him, and went in search of Hester.

When Dr. Ware came again they convinced him of their determination to work, and he promised to look about and see what opening could be found for them. He had only a moment to give them that morning, but said he should return in the evening to have a long talk.

When Hester kept him a second longer to display, with considerable pride, the wine jelly she had made for her father, he shook his head.

"Not just yet, my dear," he said, kindly. Her disappointment was so evident that the good Doctor felt inclined to eat it himself by way of proving his admiration of her culinary skill, and then—he had an inspiration.

"Hester," he said, "will you do me a favor?"

"Indeed, I will."

"I should like to carry that jelly off with me; it fairly makes my mouth water. If you'll give it to me, my dear, I will allow your father to eat an unlimited amount of it later on; and then think how busy you will be! Come, is it a bargain?"

"Dr. Ware! As if you need ask! Why, you know I'd just love to give it to you."

She had arranged the jelly in a dainty dish, and now ran into the dining-room for a doily, which she wrapped about it.

"Won't you let us send it over to you, Dr. Ware?" Julie asked.

"No, thank you, Julie; I'm going to drive right home," and the Doctor went off with the dish in his hand.

When he reappeared that evening he astonished the girls by approaching them silently, while he bowed with great ceremony before

Hester, to whom he held out a package and said: "Allow me to congratulate you, my dear."

Greatly mystified, Hester took the package and unwrapped it, to find the glass jelly dish she had given him that morning, in the bottom of which lay a two-dollar bill. She looked up at him wonderingly.

"It is yours, Hester," he said. "I plead guilty. I took that jelly to a crotchety old patient of mine who is boarding, and reviles all the jelly his nurse buys for him. I told him I thought I had found some that would please him, and I was right. He devoured half of it while I was there. Then he insisted on paying for it. I did not tell him where it came from, but he wants some more, and he said that was what it was worth." He was watching her closely.

She had taken up the bill, and was handling it nervously, a deep flush on her bewildered young face. "Julie," she exclaimed, breathlessly, turning instinctively to her sister, "Julie, I've *earned* some money!"

"How splendid!" Julie stared at the bill as if it were different from any she had seen before. Hester threw her arms impulsively around Dr. Ware's neck. "This is the only way I know how to thank you," she cried.

"I shall instantly create a demand for your jelly, my dear, if I am always to get a commission

like this," the Doctor laughingly remarked, delighted at the success of his venture.

"Are you serious, Dr. Ware? Do you suppose I could make jelly to sell?" she asked, anxiously.

"Why not, Hester?"

The girl was silent for a moment then suddenly she cried, "Julie Dale, we'll *cook* for a living!"

"Cook!" repeated Julie, incredulously, "I don't know a thing about cooking."

"No, but I do. Don't you know how Cousin Nancy was always fussing because I would haunt the kitchen down there? I learned how to make jelly from her old colored mammie, and heaps of things beside. Of course, I never actually put my hand into anything — old Rachel wouldn't let me, but I saw how she did lots of things, and her cakes were famous all through the County, you know they were. If we can sell wine jelly we ought to be able to sell other things, don't you think so, Dr. Ware?"

"I do indeed, my dear; I think your idea is excellent."

"Hester, I will learn, I am sure I can," cried Julie hurriedly. "I'm aching to get my fingers into something."

"Of course you'll learn—we'll both have to learn as we go along, and even if we don't succeed it's worth trying."

"As for that," said the Doctor, "anything you may attempt will be more or less in the nature of an experiment."

"Yes," acquiesced Hester, "and if we do succeed it means working together, Julie dear, in a place of our own, and being with Dad. Just think what that would mean!"

"Everything!" assented her sister. "I believe you've hit upon a way—there always is a way, if one keeps looking!"

"One of the first things to ascertain," said Dr. Ware, "is the cost of materials and the market price of such things as you suggest making."

"Yes," confessed Hester. It had never occurred to her in the whole course of her young life to consider the cost of anything.

From this the talk went on to other things relative to the change about to take place, and Dr. Ware remained several hours in earnest conversation with them. At the end of that time, when he rose to take his departure, there was, added to the affection already in his heart, a tremendous feeling of admiration and respect for these girls, whose spirits flashed undaunted; while they, on their part, were experiencing through him the depths of human kindness.

"We mean to be worthy of all you are doing for us," said Julie, stopping a moment to steady her voice, "and we mean to make our fight as

bravely as you and Daddy did years ago, when you tramped through the Wilderness together."

The Doctor straightened his shoulders and made a military salute. "On to victory!" was all he said.

CHAPTER IV

"GEORGE WASHINGTON! G-e-o-r-g-e W-a-s-h-i-n-g-t-o-n!"

"Ma'am?"

"Why don't you answer the first time I call you? Come here and go hunt the Colonel and tell him I want him directly. He is around the house somewhere."

George Washington, aged ten, his woolly head full of sticks, his bluejeans sadly perforated and the lower portion of his ebony limbs guiltless of covering, came out from behind the kitchen quarters and shambled off in search of his master.

"That boy shows old Rachel's blood," soliloquized the mistress of Wavertree Hall; "he would not run if there were a bomb under him!"

It was one of those balmy days in Virginia, when the sly, deceptive October sun kisses one into the belief that summer will remain always. Mrs. Driscoe sat down on the back steps of the verandah and watched two cocks fighting in the yard, as she awaited the appearance of her husband. She looked, herself, not unlike a bird of ruffled plumage, for the bit of lace and pink ribbon

with which she ornamented her scanty locks was awry, while her crocheted shawl—pink to match the ribbon—hung off one shoulder, and her whole aspect presented a disheveled appearance which in her indicated a perturbed state of mind. Now and then she glanced at an open letter in her hand, the contents of which seemed to displease her, for she shook the paper as if it were a live thing she were chastising and tapped her foot impatiently.

Presently a voice behind her said mildly: "Did you want me, my dear?"

"Want you? Certainly I wanted you! What do you suppose I sent for you for if I didn't want you?" Mrs. Driscoe drew up her pink shawl with a gesture that spoke volumes.

"Won't you get a headache, Nancy, sitting out there in the sun?" asked the Colonel solicitously.

Concern for her physical welfare touched his wife's vanity and appealed to her heart. She softened perceptibly.

"Maybe I had better come up and sit in a chair," she said. "It's those girls that have upset me. I believe they're clean daft."

He helped her up and pulled a chair into a shady part of the verandah, waiting until she was comfortably ensconced before seating himself.

He was a gallant, the Colonel, full of little

courtesies which endeared him to the hearts of women. That was why the Widow Chisholme married him, the County said. She wanted—but does it matter after all these years what the County said?

He sat down now beside her and waited for her to begin. She usually did begin and end everything.

"The girls refuse to come—I've just had a letter from Julie; she is the most independent, ungrateful young minx I ever heard of!"

"Oh—ah—not that, Nancy, not that, I am sure—ahem—you must be mistaken. She impressed me as a very gentle, sweet young creature."

"Gentle fiddlesticks! Do you call that gentle?" flaunting the letter in his face.

"Possibly, my dear, if I were to know the contents of the letter I might be better able to form an opinion."

She handed it over and watched him read it.

"Ah," he commented at the end, "what remarkably original girls!"

"Give that letter to me, Driscoe," (she had always called him Driscoe from the beginning) "I don't believe you half understand it—you are always way off in the clouds somewhere when you haven't got your nose buried in a book. Those girls are going to work—to cook! They actually

prefer to cook for a living when they might come down here and live like ladies the rest of their lives. They have moved into rooms their Doctor found for them—I expect it is one of those nasty little places they call flats, in some horrid neighborhood and I am sure no one will go near them and they'll die of loneliness with their crazy notions." "Cook!" she repeated scornfully, "who ever heard of a lady doing a servant's work!" The little pink bow on the top of her head fairly quivered in outraged sympathy.

"I am sure the girls appreciate your offer to give them a home," Colonel Driscoe said when he was allowed to speak, "Julie's letter speaks very feelingly about it. If they think it wise to try and be independent I must say I can't help but admire their spirit."

"That is all you know about it! In my day girls did not do odd, independent things—they did as they were told!"

It occurred to the Colonel that her day was past, but he wisely refrained from giving the thought utterance.

"A lot of your foolish Northern notions still cling to you Driscoe," she said resentfully. "It is my opinion that those Dale girls have disgraced the family—there is too much of their father in them—a true Fairleigh would never

stoop to menial labor; and yet their mother and I had the same Fairleigh grandmother. Oh, it is too trying—their behavior—too trying for anything! It terrifies me to think what they may come to!" She stopped rocking in her chair and sniffed audibly.

"There, there, Nancy, don't take it so to heart," comforted her husband, "it may be best as it is—we'll see if we can't raise a little money somewhere to send them—the poor young things must be in sore straits these days with poverty to face and an invalid father to take care of."

"Umph! they don't act like it—and as for money, I don't see it lying round loose on the plantation."

This was a sore point with the Colonel, who was known since his marriage to have swallowed up a considerable portion of his small income patenting farming implements that were impracticable. He had been a bachelor with an inventive turn of mind and only one lung when he met the Widow Chisholme at the Springs. Upon marrying her it seemed most desirable for her convenience (for she would never have tolerated life outside of Virginia) and his health, that they should live on the Chisholme property, which was somewhat extensive and kept them land poor. Mr. Driscoe, New Hampshire born and

bred, settled down into a country gentleman and turned his attention to agriculture; but his mind, half inventive, half scholarly, wholly visionary, had made rather a sorry mess of it, and his wife, who had never relinquished the reins of government, now held them with a firmer hand. He was Colonel only by courtesy, the servants having dubbed him that immediately. It was impossible for them to recognize a real gentleman without a title.

He said no more about money, but shaded his eyes and looked down the long avenue leading out to the road. In the distance he could see a small darky open a gate, while down the road came a horse with a swift gallop.

"Here comes Nannie, my dear. She will not be pleased with your news, will she?" the Colonel said regretfully.

The girl brought the horse up with a sharp turn at the steps, thereby causing consternation to a brood of chickens, which scattered in every direction. Then she threw the bridle to George Washington and slipped to the ground.

"My," she exclaimed, fanning herself with her hat, "it is pretty warm riding."

"Now don't sit down there and take cold," expostulated her mother; "here, put my shawl around you."

Nannie, who had dropped down on the steps,

laughed and shook her head. "A shawl in October! who ever heard of such a thing. I am all right, mummie; don't take it off—it looks so pretty on you." She smiled at her mother, who was not proof against this bit of flattery, though her only manifestation was a closer drawing of the shawl around her shoulders. "Don't you feel very well, mummie?" the girl asked, conscious that the atmosphere was not altogether salubrious.

"Well enough," replied the older woman, flipping a letter nervously between her fingers as she rocked to and fro.

"Your mother has heard from your cousin Julie," volunteered the Colonel.

"Let me see the letter, quick, mummie. When are they coming?"

"They are not coming at all," replied Mrs. Driscoe, with a resentful toss of her head, meanwhile thrusting the obnoxious letter into her pocket.

Nan's face fell. "Oh, mummie, can't I see the letter, please?"

"Certainly not. It is full of crazy ideas that are most unbecoming in a young girl, and I don't consider such things proper for you to read."

Colonel Driscoe gave an apologetic cough and opened his lips as if to speak, but apparently thought better of it and studied his finger nails

with unwonted interest. Nan drew cabalistic signs on the steps with her riding crop, and for some moments the silence was unbroken save for the half chuckling singing of George Washington, who was turning somersaults near by. Then Nannie said wistfully:

"May I know why the girls are not coming, please?"

The Colonel started to explain, but was overruled by his wife, who preferred to give her own interpretation of the case. Accordingly she poured out a torrent of abuse, in which her own individual woes over what she called their "disobedience" were so involved with a mixed statement of facts that Nan might have been led to believe that her cousins were lost to all sense of propriety had she not thoroughly understood her mother. As it was she listened quietly, sympathized with and petted her, and told her not to bother her head any more about two naughty girls in the North. She was a girl of considerable tact, this Nannie, for all that the whole establishment "babied" her, and she knew just how to smooth down her mother's ruffled plumage; so that Mrs. Driscoe, after a good, comfortable cry, which was a great relief to her overwrought feelings, was persuaded to go indoors and lie down to recover from the shock of the morning.

Nannie remained on the verandah with her father. "Will *you* tell me about it now?" she said, when her mother was well out of hearing.

The Colonel's version, as he understood it from Julie's letter was expressed in five minutes.

"Oh, dear!" Nannie exclaimed, when he had finished, "I wish they did not feel that way about things. I did so hope they were going to bring their father here and let us nurse him, and live with us, and be just like my own sisters—I've always wanted a sister so! I can't seem to make it out exactly, pa, how girls like that who have always had every mortal thing on earth, can work just like poor girls."

"No, you can't understand, kitten," stroking her head affectionately; "it's against all the traditions of your bringing up that you should, for your mother takes such extreme views. But for my part, I think they are very noble and deserve tremendous credit for taking the stand they have."

"Oh! so do I," echoed the girl enthusiastically. "I just love them for it. I think it is grand to be so heroic and brave. Why, just think, pa, they are not very much older than I, and yet all of a sudden it seems as if they were women and I only a baby."

"We want to keep our little girl a while yet,"

he said. "I have no fear but she will be womanly enough when the time comes."

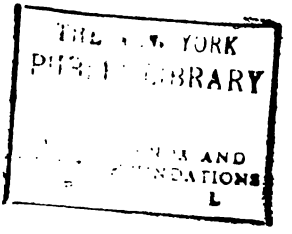
"We did have the loveliest times when the girls were here, didn't we?" she said reminiscently. "They could ride as well as any girl in the county, and Julie was the prettiest thing I ever saw. Do you remember the funny tricks Hester did—springing on a horse bareback, and riding backward, and things she'd learned from the cowboys? Oh! I did miss them terribly when they went away."

"They were unusually companionable to us all, I think, Nannie. I am sure I missed them unspeakably."

The girl sat down on the arm of his chair and as she leaned her head against his, two tears trickled down the end of her nose and into his neck. He put his arms about her and drew her into his lap, where she lay, a dejected little heap, sobbing bitterly.

"There, there, kitten, don't cry; Mr. Dale may get better, and the girls may be able to bring him down for a long visit some time—who knows?" said the kindly Colonel, who was already planning in his mind how he could defray the expenses, should such a journey be possible. "We will all have some happy times together again, Nannie; you'll see, little girl."

THE GIRL SAT DOWN ON THE ARM OF HIS CHAIR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Nan heaved a sigh and was comforted. It is easy to be sanguine at seventeen.

Suddenly she exclaimed: "Do you know what?" sitting up and revealing a tear-stained face and two brimming brown eyes which she rubbed with the Colonel's handkerchief, her own having long since been reduced to a damp little ball; "I'm going to write to the girls not to mind a thing mummie writes them, for she really loves them just the same, and you and I love them heaps more—if such a thing is possible—and think about them and just hope with all our might and main that Cousin Dale will be better, and they won't have to work themselves to death. Oh, don't I just wish I could help them!" "Pa!" she cried in a sudden inspiration, "you know the new saddle you were going to give me for my birthday?"

"Yes, Nannie."

"Well, you have not bought it, have you? and I don't want it—I want you to send the money to the girls instead."

"But, Nannie, child, you have talked of that saddle for months. Are you sure you want to do this?"

"Oh! yes," she cried, rapturously with a childish clap of her hands; "I'd love to do it more than anything. Can you see about it to-

day?" Her soft brown eyes were not brimming now, but full of eagerness.

"I am almost afraid," said the Colonel, shaking his head, "that your mother will not consent and that the girls might refuse to let you do it if they knew."

"Oh, they must not know," said Nannie with an air of importance borne of the project in hand. "No one must know, not even mummie; it is a secret between you and me. We will send an anonymous letter the way they do in books. Oh! won't it be fun?"

"Who ever would have suspected we had an arch-conspirator in our midst," said the Colonel slyly, "and that she would victimize an old man like me?" In his heart he was rejoicing over her pretty exhibition of girlish love and unselfishness. Then more seriously, he added: "I am afraid we shall have to wait until your birthday really comes round, Puss. I have not the money just now."

"But you are going to let me do it, aren't you? No matter if we do have to wait, come and begin the letter now. We must make it very mysterious, and manage to get it to them somehow so they will never suspect. How do you suppose we can?" She looked at him, confident that he would suggest something.

And he did. But what he said was whispered

so low that even we cannot hear. The effect on her was instantaneous, and caused her to dance about delightedly. Then suddenly remembering that her mother was sleeping in an adjacent room, she became subdued and catching her father by the arm drew him quietly into the house.

CHAPTER V

IT is not until a great crisis is past that one comprehends with any clearness of vision the multitudinous events that whirl about the one supreme fact. Stunned by the first shock, one wakes to learn that close on the heels of disaster come the consequences—pell-mell, helter-skelter, pushing, crowding with a grim insistence from which there is no escape. It was small wonder, then, that to the Dale girls the world seemed topsy-turvy.

A change being inevitable, their one desire was to get it over quickly, the first of October, therefore, saw them moved into new quarters. The arrangements had been made by Dr. Ware, who effected a compromise with the girls—he offering them a vacant apartment in a house he owned, they gladly accepting this home if he would allow them to pay rent when they became successful wage-earners. The good Doctor sighed and consented; he recognized there was no thwarting their earnest purpose. In the first discussion of plans, he had suggested a little house in the suburbs; but Hester, with her practical nature

fast developing, had said that to do business they must be within reach of people—in the midst of things. She did not quite know how she knew this—perhaps it was more that she felt it instinctively; but it met with Dr. Ware's approval and had great weight with Julie, who secretly longed for the country, but put aside all personal inclination and voted with her sister. The result was a flat in a quiet, unpretentious neighborhood, which yet took on a semblance of gentility from its proximity to Crana Street.

By methods known only to himself, Dr. Ware saved furniture enough to make the place comfortable, while Bridget, who assumed mysterious airs for days before their departure, saw to it that there was no lack of household necessities. Bridget was no small factor in those days. She came to the front with tremendous energy, backed up her young mistresses in all their plans, and vowed she would never leave them. So the little family held together, which was the main thing, and the girls settled themselves in the new quarters with brave spirits—was not this, after all, the real meaning of "making a home for Dad"?

All the choicest things were brought to the furnishing of his room; the gayest pictures to relieve the tedium of the weary hours, his best loved books near at hand, though he could no

longer read or even reach out his hand to touch them. In the window-sill Julie had set up a miniature conservatory of potted plants that promised to bloom gayly, for down upon them poured the morning sun, filling the room with golden light. This was their resting-place in the new life—their father the center about whom they gathered in every spare moment—the room a little shrine from which in the midst of their attendance upon him many a silent prayer for strength and courage went up to God.

The other sleeping-rooms were bedrooms by courtesy—mere closets, one of which was given to Bridget and in the other the girls managed to squeeze a double bed. Hester suggested that berths would be much more convenient, and only the lack of money prevented her having that sort of sleeping arrangement constructed.

"Julie!" she exclaimed, in the first days of squeezing themselves in, "it is something like living in the car again, isn't it? only it is so—so different. I believe I'll call the flat 'The Hustle'—only instead of *its* hustling like the car, we'll be the ones. Oh, Julie dear, to think of never racing around the country like that again!"

"Don't Hester; I can't bear to think of it." In spite of her good resolutions Julie's courage sometimes failed her.

A few days later Hester came into the kitchen

one morning, her arms full of paper bags strongly suggestive of the corner grocery. "There!" she cried, "I've invested my last dollar in things for the cake."

"Is it to-day you are going to see Miss Ware?" Julie asked.

"Yes, if the cake comes out all right. Roll up your sleeve, old girl, and we'll begin." Hester suited the action to the words by weighing the ingredients and turning the butter into a bowl. But ah! how hard it was to put her pretty hand into it—how greasy the butter felt and how sandy the sugar, and how unpleasant the general stickiness! But she worked it through her fingers energetically, while Julie beat the eggs.

"It is going to be death on our hands, my dear," remarked Hester, picking up a knife with which she scraped the dough from her fingers.

"I wish you would always let me do that part, Hester. I know how you will feel it to hurt your hands."

"Well, as if I'd be likely to! No one part is worse than another. We'll get used to it after a while, though I know our hands will spread out to twice their natural size."

"Perhaps even if they do get big and not quite so fine as they are now, *perhaps* we won't mind, Hester, if we just think of it as scars in the bat-

tle, you know. Don't you know how Daddy has often talked of the honorable scars in the battle of life? We're just finding out what that means, old girl."

"Well, if you haven't a most blessed faculty for putting a comfortable construction on everything!" Hester emphasized her words by a last vigorous beat of the dough and held out the spoon to her sister. "Just taste this, will you, Julie? I think it's fine."

"Umph, it is," agreed Julie, who had disdained the spoon, and dabbed her finger in the mixture after the manner of cooks. "But, my dear, if we create a demand for cake like that which requires only the whites of eggs, what shall we do with the yolks? Eat them, I suppose," making up a wry face.

"They are better than nothing and I do not see chickens hopping in the window, do you?"

"No," reluctantly. "We have fifteen dollars in the house," she announced solemnly. "How long do you suppose we can live on that?"

"I am sure I don't know, Julie. We must learn to eat less, and that is no joke. I'll tell you what, one of the hardest things is learning to do without what has always seemed absolutely necessary." There was a husky sound in Hester's voice which Julie did not like to hear.

"No matter, dear, we are young and strong,

and we will accomplish something before we get through. Why, if you stop to think of it, nearly every one who has made a success of life has started in the smallest kind of way."

Hester nodded.

"Did you say you were going to see Miss Ware to-day?"

"Yes, I think I had better take her this loaf if it bakes properly. Will you come with me, Julie?"

"No, dear, I think you will manage better alone, though I'll go of course, if you want me."

"No, I had rather go alone," said Hester.

But no expedition to Miss Ware's took place that day, for the cake was spoiled in the baking and four succeeding attempts shared the same tragic fate. Toward night, when the failures of the day had reduced them to the verge of despondency, Dr. Ware came in and carried them off for a long drive which wonderfully freshened up their spirits. On the way home he asked their assistance in sending out a thousand circulars in regard to some medical matters, telling them it would be a tremendous help to him if they would write them. They acquiesced delightedly and accordingly that evening a huge bundle of stationery was left at their door. Inside, stuck in a package of envelopes, was a slip on which was written: "Here's the paper

and the form to be copied. Don't keep at this too persistently, little girls, or you'll bring down the wrath of your faithful friend, Philip Ware."

More than glad to have an opportunity of being of use to the Doctor, the girls set to work early the next morning writing industriously. Julie, after a few smirched and blotted copies, got well under way; she had considerable precision in her character, which made a task like this simple. But Hester during the first day or two spoiled so many sheets that she viewed her rapidly filling waste-basket with dismay. Finally, in supreme disgust she threw down her pen.

"I believe I could build a house easier!" was her impatient exclamation. "Who ever saw such daubs as I'm making!"

Julie looked up and smiled. Her wrist ached, and she shook her hand to limber the muscles. "If you did not dig your pen in the ink with such a high-tragedy, Scott-Siddons air, maybe you'd get on better," she suggested.

"High-tragedy fiddlesticks! I *like* a lot of ink. I am sure you're a sight," she commented, with sisterly frankness; "all doubled up and your forehead screwed into knots. How many have you done?"

"I don't know; there they are," pointing to a box-cover piled high.

Hester surveyed them with lofty scorn. "Mercy! That is nothing! I've done heaps!"

"Where are they, you airy young person?"

"In the waste-basket, mostly."

"Go to work, you ridiculous infant, or you will be stuck to that chair the rest of your natural days."

When Dr. Ware attempted to pay them for the work they remonstrated, telling him in the most convincing language at their command that it was a pleasure to feel they could do even so small a thing for him. To this he refused to agree, finally persuading them to take the money if on no other ground than to convince him of their business principles; while he refrained from mentioning that he had himself deviated somewhat from business methods when he ordered the circulars written instead of printed in the usual way.

A week later the almond cake for Miss Ware was baked successfully and an admiring group stood about the kitchen table taking a last look at it before Hester did it up in a box preparatory to setting forth.

"Faith, it's a beauty," cried Bridget, arms akimbo. "Any lady'd be proud to eat it. Shure it's your mother's own fingers ye've got, the both of yez. Ther' warn't nothin' she couldn't make when she put her hand to it, be-

fore she got so ailin', an' the Major, God bless him, got so well off she didn't have ter."

"Poor, dear mamma!" said Julie, wistfully. "I only remember her ill and not able to bear us noisy children about."

"Sufferin' made her a changed woman, the Saints preserve her! But I seen the day, Miss Julie, when she slaved for the Major before you was born an' there warn't nobody could beat her at anythin'. It looks like her knack was croppin' out in yez, shure as my name's Bridget Maloney."

"Perhaps it is, Bridget," said Hester, who had heard this conversation from the next room, where she was putting on her coat and hat. "We have often heard Daddy tell people mamma was a practical genius, that would mean nimble fingers, wouldn't it? Maybe she has left them to us as a legacy."

"I'm not after understandin' your words exactly, dearie, but the meanin's clear an' it's right yez are."

As Hester picked up the box, Peter Snooks sprang down from the window-sill jumping wildly about, the sight of her hat being conclusive evidence to him that she was going out.

"Poor little Snooks, not this time," the girl said, stooping to pat him. "I am going in the car to-day."

His stump of a tail drooped dejectedly as he looked at her with big reproachful eyes.

"It does seem mean not to take him, doesn't it, Julie?—but it is not worth while, for it is so stormy I thought I had better ride both ways." It was only dire extremity that permitted the extravagance of car-fares these days.

"Of course you must ride," said Julie. "Peter Snooks," to the still hopeful little fellow, "you must not tease. Go find your ball and we'll have a play."

He trotted off and Hester picked up the box and started.

"Tell Miss Ware that is only a hundredth part of the nice things you can make, you clever girl," Julie called after her.

"An' good luck to you, dearie," from Bridget.

The wind and rain blew about Hester unpleasantly when she reached the street, but a car soon overtook her and afforded her a welcome shelter from the storm. She found all the seats occupied, but some of the passengers moved up to make room for her, and being a trifle tired from the nervousness of the cake-making, she thankfully squeezed into the bit of space allotted her, and laid the box in her lap.

Her thoughts as the car sped along were not of the most cheerful, for she dreaded this visit to Miss Ware. That individual, who kept house

for her brother, had expressed herself in terms of strong disapproval of the girls when he had told her their plans. She considered cooking greatly beneath them and would have thoroughly agreed with the views of their Cousin Nancy in Virginia, had she known that person. As it was, she thought her brother should interest himself in finding suitable positions for them, and she refused to recognize the fact that these were not to be had for the asking. "There were plenty of ladylike things girls could do," she said, but did not give herself the trouble to specify.

To the girls themselves she had talked at some length, endeavoring to explain to them that they were laying out for themselves a path of social ostracism by their extraordinary choice of work, never doubting that this argument alone would convince them. But when Julie gently put it aside with the assurance that she and Hester were sufficient to themselves if the world chose to look askance at them; and when Hester flushed angrily, and said the people whose friendship was worth anything would not fail them, Miss Ware shrugged her shoulders and gave them up as social heretics. She was not, however, allowed to wash her hands of them, for her brother sang their praises perpetually. She

therefore forced herself to take a negative interest in them which carried her so far as to order from them a loaf of cake.

Hester, gazing abstractedly out of the car window, felt it a momentous errand on which she was going that day; it involved so much. If the cake met with the critical approval of Miss Ware she intended to ask her to solicit orders for it. It would not be easy to approach her on this subject, but she should do it—oh! yes, she did not intend to be frightened out of her purpose. A curious little ache came into her heart as she braced herself for the coming ordeal. It was all so new and so strange, to be put in the position of asking favors—to be looked down upon from frigid heights—she and Julie, whose world hitherto had been all sunshine and approval. For a second something came between her and the window, blurring her vision. Then she brought herself up with a sharp mental rebuke for allowing her thoughts for one moment to revert to the past, and forced herself to look down with satisfaction on the neatly wrapped box she was carrying.

By this time the car had become crowded, and directly in front of Hester stood a woman of amazing breadth, clinging in a limp, swaying fashion to the strap. Just as the girl observed

her and was wondering if she could squeeze into her seat should she offer it to her, the car jerked round a corner, the stout woman screamed and landed with a thud on the box in Hester's lap!

CHAPTER VI

COMFORTABLY ensconced in a victoria, two men were bowling out through the suburbs of Radnor in the rapidly approaching dusk of a winter afternoon. One, wrapped to the chin in furs, sat well back in the corner of the carriage as if desirous of all possible protection from the cold; the other leaned forward in a somewhat restive attitude and looked like a man occupying his position under protest. Each was immersed in his own thoughts, but from time to time the younger man took a surreptitious glance in the direction of the older as if he were endeavoring to make some important discovery. He was, in truth, trying to decide if the moment were propitious for laying before his father a project which he had been for some time considering, but the impassive face of Mr. Landor told him nothing, and they continued to ride on in silence. Finally, in a tone of annoyance the older man said: "I wish, Kenneth, you would oblige me by leaning back and appearing as if you were enjoying yourself. I must confess it is no particular pleasure to me to drive

with a man who looks as if he might leap from the carriage at any moment."

"Then why do you insist on my going, father? You know I detest this sort of thing—it is only fit for women. If you would come out with me now in my trap, it would be very different."

"Your breakneck method of driving does not suit me at all. I suppose I may be allowed to take my pleasures in my own way, and it occurs to me that it is not altogether unreasonable to request you to accompany me occasionally."

To this Kenneth made no reply, while he decided that the moment was *not* propitious for introducing the subject uppermost in his mind.

He conceded, however, to his father's wishes in so far as to relax from his objectionable posture, though there was about him a suggestion of martyrdom that was irritating.

"What have you been doing to-day?" asked the senior Landor, abruptly.

"Nothing special, sir."

"Do you ever do anything special?" turning two penetrating eyes upon him.

"Why, yes; I suppose so. I was thinking of something special just now." After all, it might as well come out.

"If it is of any importance, I should like to hear about it."

This was encouraging.

"I was thinking of a trip around the world, sir. To start in a month, say, and be gone two or three years."

Mr. Landor received this proposition with a quick drawing down of his shaggy eyebrows and a closer upturning of his fur collar about his chin. His face now was almost hidden from view.

"Do you propose to go alone?" he asked.

"No; two fellows at the Aldine Club have talked me into joining them. Of course, sir, I realize you may object to so long an absence," said Kenneth, who felt that a storm was brewing, "and I might be able to make it a year or so if you preferred."

"Inasmuch as you have scarcely been at home a month in the past year or so, I should prefer that you dismiss the project altogether."

"That seems rather surprising, sir," said Kenneth, with a laugh his father did not like, "when I have been going and coming without comment ever since I left college."

"All the more reason why you should begin to think of settling down," replied his father testily.

"Settling down?" repeated the son; "what do you want me to do?"

"We will come to that later. The main thing

is, that you are to give up this notion and remain here with me. If you force me to it I shall refuse to give you the money for such an expedition."

"I have some property of my own," Kenneth said, his whole nature rising in rebellion.

"You wouldn't be such a fool as to squander that pittance on a pleasure trip! Be careful, Kenneth! I am in no mood to be thwarted today!"

"Then why do you thwart me? It is not a remarkable thing for a man to want to travel," trying to speak calmly, "and I don't see why you should take it in this unexpected way—it is unreasonable."

But Mr. Landor, being a quick-tempered man, was beyond reason and had too little comprehension of his son to realize that his opposition tended to fan into a fixed resolve what had up to this time been only a pleasing possibility. There was a stern look about his mouth as he said to Kenneth, "You will do as I say, and remain for the present in Radnor. I have other plans for you."

As he had never been dictated to in his life, this emphatic order fell with considerable astonishment upon Kenneth's ears, even though he knew his father to be in an irascible frame of mind. He thought, however, that the thing

might blow over, as many a quarrel between them had blown over, after which, in all these contests of will, the younger man had invariably gained the day.

Kenneth was not of an ugly disposition; indeed, his nature was most lovable, while his peculiar exemption from responsibility had produced an inconsequential, happy-go-lucky attitude toward life that was one of his greatest charms. And the selfishness that sometimes cropped out in his character was not viciousness, but the natural outcome of over-indulgence. It had never occurred to him that his father would make any demands upon him, though in a vague, unformed sort of way he intended ultimately to make demands upon himself. Just how he should do this gave him occasional delightfully introspective moments in which he played with possibilities. In his father's eyes that was Kenneth's great weakness—that he played with all the abandon of a vagabond; but to blame the man for this was a great injustice, since his father had not suggested or encouraged his taking up any business or profession, and had supplied him with a liberal income dating back to the beginning of his college career.

To this indolent, pleasure-loving son, nothing could be in greater contrast than the father. Caleb Landor took life hard, but life had been

hard on him. Born of poor parents in a Maine village, he had been inured to poverty from his infancy. His schooling had been meager, and sandwiched in between long periods when he was required to lend a hand in the saw-mill where his father was employed. But the habit of industry thus acquired proved useful, and stimulated his desire to get into the world of business, so that he made his way eventually to Radnor, the goal of his ambition. Then followed years of hard work and small pay, during which the greater part of his earnings went down to the large family in the Maine village. At thirty he was looked upon as a man of ability; at forty he was a prosperous merchant, with Fortune beckoning him on. By all the laws of compensation this should have been his turning point to happiness, but he had the misfortune to be married for his money at this period of his career, by a frivolous Radnor girl of good position, whose beauty turned his head. As after the first months of marriage she took no pains to conceal her indifference to him, he received a bitter blow, from which he was many years recovering. He was spared, however, the anguish of protracted disappointment, for she had died in the second year of their marriage, leaving him a baby son. And so Caleb, giving all, lost what he had never won.

This episode in his life did not tend to soften

a nature somewhat morose and caused him to draw more and more within himself, devoting his energies to his business, and almost forgetting at times that he was a father.

When he did think of Kenneth, it was to realize that he had his mother's beauty; but even at an early age there was no indication that he had inherited her smallness of mind, for which his father felt devoutly grateful, though there were times when he could scarcely bear the boy about, so forcibly did his likeness to his mother bring back the past. So he left him to grow up among the servants in the dreary house, sent him at fourteen to a preparatory school and then to college. He intended that Kenneth should have everything he himself had missed. In the matter of money it pleased him to provide generously for the lad, who grew to manhood the envy and favorite of all his associates, but almost a stranger to his father, who was equally a stranger to him. It did not occur to Caleb Landor that this was because he had given to the boy lavishly of everything except himself.

When the carriage drew up before their door on the evening with which this chapter opens, Kenneth sprang out with a feeling of relief and turned to help his father. It struck him suddenly that he looked old and feeble, which would not be strange, inasmuch as he was fast approach-

ing his seventieth birthday, but Kenneth had never been impressed by this before.

"You had better take my arm, sir," he said, pleasantly, "the sidewalk is slippery to-night."

Mr. Landor refused the proffered aid and went on ahead into the house. He had yet to learn that Kenneth could be leaned upon.

Through dinner there was little conversation between them, not from any constraint arising out of the recent disagreement, but because each was in the habit of carrying on his own inward train of thought without so much as a suspicion that the outward expression of it would have been of interest to the other. But it would have been of interest. Kenneth often wondered what his father's opinions were on the topics of the day and many times would have broken the oppressive silence if the idea had not become fixed in his mind that his father built up this barrier of reserve from choice. It was a natural impression, but a wrong one, and led to many misunderstandings, for though he gave his son no encouragement to be communicative he secretly longed for his companionship and was beginning to feel a need of his presence in the house.

Kenneth went to a couple of receptions that evening and looked in at a dance later on; but did not remain long, for things of this sort bored

him, albeit he was very popular in Radnor society.

As he entered the house after midnight he noticed a bright light in his father's room. This was so unusual an occurrence that he feared something might be wrong and ventured to knock at the door. There was no response, which was not reassuring, so he opened the door and walked in. In a big chintz-covered chair sat Mr. Landor asleep before the fire. He had undressed and was enveloped in a heavy dressing-gown that fell away at the neck, disclosing the throat upon which Time lays such relentless fingers. He stirred a little and Kenneth was about to leave the room satisfied that his father was all right and would probably resent this intrusion, when the older man woke with a start, and accosting him in a tone more curious than resentful, said, "What are you doing in here?"

"I noticed your light, and thought you might be ill. Is there anything I can do for you before I turn in?" replied Kenneth, looking down from the height of his six feet upon the shrunken figure of his father.

"Nothing at all, nothing at all," waving him off; "I am reading." He picked up the newspaper that had fallen to the floor, and became

suddenly absorbed in it, after the manner of persons who object to being caught napping.

A smile flickered about Kenneth's well-shaped mouth but was properly suppressed. There was something pathetic, almost appealing to him to-night about his father.

"If you are not in any particular hurry to finish your paper may I stop a moment?" he said.

"There is a chair—make yourself comfortable."

"I would like to talk about those plans you spoke of this afternoon," began Kenneth as soon as he was seated. "I wish very much you would tell me more about them—what your idea is for my immediate future."

"Where are your own ideas? At twenty-eight a man must have a few." Mr. Landor kicked a log impatiently, sending up a shower of sparks.

"We were speaking of your ideas, were we not, sir? Mine can come later."

"So you have some, have you? Good! After all, with your education and advantages it is to be expected. But as your ideas are to be kept to yourself, so are mine. We will talk no further on this subject."

"We *will* talk on this subject," said Kenneth, rising and standing with head erect and flashing

eyes. "I am not a boy, father, as you very well know, and I shall not consent to this sort of thing for a moment. If you have anything in your mind regarding me it is my right to know it, and your duty to tell me. You spoke to-day of my settling down. I have been thinking of it a good deal since, and I am inclined to think you are right about it; but I would like to know just what you mean—just what it is you want me to do."

"Kenneth, I want you around." The words came in a muffled tone that was scarcely audible.

"Want me around?" repeated Kenneth incredulously; "why, I thought I drove you to desperation with my lazy ways and erratic hours and general worthlessness."

"So you do, so you do," gruffly, "but I like it. I like to know you are in the house. Stay around, Kenneth and you can have things pretty much your own way. We will say no more about settling down to business."

"Oh! that is all right, father; I'll stay." It was a new sensation to find that he was wanted. Moved by a sudden impulse he drew near meaning to grip his father's hand—the desire was strong within him to get close to the old man. But when he neared the chair he turned sharply on his heel and crossed to the door, withheld by the habit of years.

Mr. Landor was watching him through half-closed lids, and made no sign.

"Good night, father; glad I found you up. I have something in mind I would like to discuss with you later if I am to stay on here."

"Any time, any time. I have leisure enough for anything of importance. Come in again some time—good night." His head was turned away as he spoke.

"Poor old governor," thought Kenneth, as he went to his room; "I believe he is lonely."

When the door had closed, Caleb Landor sat some moments in deep meditation. Then he rose and slowly crossed the room to a table on which stood a box-shaped rosewood writing-desk curiously inlaid with pearl—the most treasured possession of his mother long since dead. This he unlocked, and lifting the lid pressed a small knob by means of which a secret drawer flew open. In this shallow receptacle lay an oval miniature which the man took out and held under the strong light of the gas jet. It was the face of a woman, young and very beautiful, and for a long while the image held the man transfixed. Once he lifted his head suddenly, as if he thought some one was approaching but it was only the noise of Kenneth's boots flung upon the floor in an adjoining room. On the mantel a clock ticked solemnly, warning him of

the flight of time, and at last he sighed wearily, and with unsteady hands dropped the miniature into its hiding place and locked the desk. For a moment he leaned heavily on the table and appeared to be listening, but all was still in Kenneth's room. Over the stern impassive features of Caleb Landor came a look of yearning tenderness. Then he put out the gas and went to bed.

CHAPTER VII

HESTER never remembered leaving the car or how she got home after the fatal catastrophe, but indelibly printed on Julie's mind would always be the picture of a wide-eyed breathless girl who rushed in upon her and threw a mangled package on the table.

"Oh, my dear! what is the matter?" cried Julie.

But Hester could not speak.

Julie picked up the battered box, disclosing the cake within crushed to a pancake. She turned to find Hester's head buried in her arms; the girl was sobbing convulsively.

"Never mind, dear," said Julie, stroking her head sympathetically, "it would be much worse if you were hurt too."

"I am not crying," the younger girl asserted stoutly; "not crying at all." She spoke in short gasps that were strangely like sobs, but Julie ignored them. "I am all out of breath from running, that is all, and I did not fall, you goose! A woman sat on me!" She broke into a peal of hysterical laughter.

It was Julie's turn to be speechless now.

"If she had just sat on *me* it wouldn't have mattered but she tumbled in the car before I knew it and there is the result!" She waved her hand tragically toward the table and wiped her eyes.

"We'll make another one right away, dear."

"Of course we will," responded Hester, pulling off her hat and coat and flinging them down impatiently; "but it breaks my heart to see such a ruin of all our work not to mention the waste of materials!"

> Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall;
> Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
> And all the king's horses and all the king's men—

sang Julie, suggestively, but was not allowed to finish the ditty, for Hester said, with a thump on the table:

"We will put this together again double quick and I will get it to Miss Ware before dark, you see if I don't."

"You had better let me go next time, Hester," said Julie, getting out the cooking utensils, "you will be tired to death."

"No, I won't; I have undertaken to do this thing, and I'll put it through if it takes forever," with which characteristic remark she set to work again.

The second effort in the culinary line was, if

possible, more successful than the first and immediately after their simple lunch of bread and milk, Hester set forth again. The storm had ceased, and to the immense delight of Peter Snooks, Hester confided to him that she should walk and a certain good little dog that she knew should go too. Julie laughed at this determination to avoid the car and called her superstitious. She laughed, too, but refused to analyze her sensations.

She found Miss Ware, when she was ushered into her presence, in rather an aggressive mood, which caused the girl to look on with some nervousness as she opened the box and surveyed the loaf critically.

"Umph!" she said, examining it through her lorgnette, "did you do that, or Bridget?"

"We did it, Miss Ware. Bridget knows nothing of fancy cooking."

"And you do, it seems. It was an odd trick for a girl to pick up in Virginia, and an undesirable one."

"We look at things differently, Miss Ware," Hester said, with considerable asperity. "I don't call it undesirable if it proves a way of supporting ourselves. I would not choose it—to cook for a living—but we've no choice in the matter whatever."

"Your father is very much to blame, Hester.

He should have looked after your interests better when he saw the crash coming. There was no need that you should be left absolutely penniless."

Hester sprang to her feet and confronted Miss Ware like a young tigress. "You shall not say such things about Dad. I will not listen—I—"

"Hoighty toighty!" broke in Miss Ware, "what a temper! You will have to curb that, my dear Hester, if you expect to get on in the world—as cooks!"

The girl flushed crimson, and bit her lip in an effort to regain her self-control.

"I—I beg your pardon," she faltered. "I—I never knew I had a temper before. It's—it's one of the new things I am learning." A sudden mist came before her, and drawing near she laid her hand on the older woman with an appealing touch. "Don't say unkind things about Daddy, please, Miss Ware; they are not true, and I—I can't bear it."

"Let's get to business," said Miss Ware, who dreaded a scene above everything. "What do you mean to charge for your cake?"

"Fifty cents." Hester was now quite herself again, and went on rapidly, "I want to ask you if you will speak about our work to your friends. I know it is asking a great deal under the circumstances, but we are such strangers here in Rad-

nor we really do not know any one to ask such a favor of but you and Dr. Ware."

"At least you have a champion in him."

Hester's eyes shone. "Next to Dad we love him better than any one in the world."

"Then why don't you behave sensibly, and come here and live, and let me take you about in society, as I meant to do this winter? I really looked forward to chaperoning you and Julie—you're very unusual girls. Now give up this nonsense of yours and behave properly."

"Oh, Miss Ware, must we go all over that again? Won't you try to see it our way, as—as your brother does? He never even talked of our coming here to live, he understands so well that we want to be independent. I know we must be a great disappointment to you. Cousin Nancy in Virginia feels just as you do, too. Ever so many persons have offered us a home. You can't think what beautiful letters we've had from Dad's friends through the west. If it were possible to move him we'd go out there to try our fortune; there are so many splendid out-of-door kinds of work a girl can do in that big country. But Dad can't be moved, and we've got to do the best we can right here in Radnor." She spoke convincingly and with a certain submissiveness that sat oddly on her young shoulders.

Miss Ware, twisting her rings round on her fingers with a contemplative air was wondering where the child got that dignity and poise.

"I've no patience with you whatever," she said finally, after a long pause, in which Hester imagined she had been waging an inward conflict. "I am wholly out of sympathy with your ideas, but you cannot be allowed to starve to death, and if cooking is the height of your ambition—"

"It isn't the height of our ambition," interrupted Hester, for youth is impatient of being misunderstood; "it is only the thing that is nearest at hand."

"Your education must be sadly deficient," regarding the girl critically. "I always told Philip the harum-scarum way you were being brought up was perfectly ruinous. If you had gone to school like other girls, you would be qualified for some lady-like position."

This was too much for Hester. "You need not trouble to do anything about the cake, Miss Ware," she said, proudly, "and I shan't come here again to hear my father insulted. And we are not going to starve either," she cried, her girlish wrath rising. "We are going to succeed and be a credit to the best education in the world!"

She threw back her head and gazed straight

into the older woman's eyes with a fearless look that was hard to meet. Only the fingers curled tight into the palms of her hands, betrayed the mighty effort she was making to hold herself in check, and this Miss Ware did not see, for Hester's unflinching eyes held her with a strange fascination. In another moment the girl had turned and left the room.

For a while after her departure Miss Ware sat motionless like a person who has received a shock. Presently she began to toy with her lorgnette, dangling it back and forth on its chain with a swinging movement as if keeping time to a rhythmic train of thought. This was not, indeed, the case, and the action arose from nervousness, for the usual calm placidity of her mind was sadly ruffled. She was not in the habit of being contradicted, particularly by what she was pleased to call "a young person"; but she was one of those women who having said their worst, proceed to contradict themselves by an interest in that which they have most condemned, and she was now speculating as to whether it would not be expedient to take Hester's cake to the meeting of her sewing class the following day, and possibly get an order or two there for it.

Only a true Radnorite could realize the possibilities that opened up to one who was intro-

duced as a subject of discussion at *the* Sewing Class of Radnor. For in the fashionable and exclusive set in which Miss Ware had her being it was a function of tremendous importance, with sacred rites known only to the initiated. In one another's drawing-rooms, on two mornings of the month, forty chosen spirits met to sew for the poor—that great, clamorous, all-devouring body from which there is no escape. This was ostensibly the purpose; in reality sewing was a minor consideration, albeit much work was accomplished. The chief end of its existence was to discuss, direct and control the movements of that exclusive portion of Radnor society of which it was a part and upon which it sat in fortnightly judgment. Following this arduous but important morning duty came the luncheon, and it was of that Miss Ware was thinking in connection with the cake.

When Hester left Miss Ware she ran down the stairs to the lower hall, where she had left Peter Snooks with strict orders to remain until her return. There she found him waiting to greet her with joyous caperings of delight.

Dr. Ware and a tall, clean-shaven, athletic-looking man came out from the office and encountered her.

"Ah, you, Hester?" said the Doctor. "Wait a moment, my dear. I have a book here

that I want you to take round to read to your father."

He vanished, and the stranger glanced at the girl, hesitated, and then stooping patted the dog. "You've a fine fox-terrier," he said in a deep, rich voice, looking up.

"We think so," replied Hester, who couldn't for the life of her conceal her pleasure at hearing Peter Snooks praised.

At that moment the Doctor came out again.

"Why, Landor," he said, "I beg your pardon; I forgot all about you when I saw Hester. That is a way the minx has—of driving everything else out of my head. Hester, my dear, this is Kenneth Landor, just up from Texas to have a look at effete civilization—you have heard me speak of him often—Mr. Landor, Miss Dale."

The young people bowed.

"Don't let him pose as a cowboy or anything interesting like that," continued the Doctor, "for he isn't really—he only plays at things. Takes a peep here and there over the continent, and pretends he is this and that and the other, as the mood seizes him. A rolling stone, eh, Landor?" turning with an affectionate, quizzical look at the man beside him.

"Oh! go on, Doctor; pile it on—don't leave me a shred of character. His veracity is absolutely unquestioned, of course, Miss Dale?"

"Of course! He has made you interesting already."

The Doctor laughed. "How one's motives are mistaken. That was the last thing I meant to do!"

Hester looked up at the Doctor, gleams of mischief in her eyes. "You being you," she said, "it couldn't be otherwise." With which ambiguous remark she went out the door.

Landor followed her down the steps. "Miss Dale," he asked, "may I walk along with you? I fancy I am going your way." Landor's way was usually where he chose to make it.

Hester acquiesced simply. She had been accustomed to the society of men since she could toddle, and felt no embarrassment in the presence of a stranger. Landor noted the free, swinging motion with which she kept step with him as they went down the street.

"You are not a true Radnorite," he said abruptly.

"No, I am not. Why?"

"Radnor girls do not walk as you do."

"I am half inclined to believe you are a cowboy, after all, Mr. Landor."

"Why?"

"Are we playing twenty questions? You have bad manners, a habit of dealing in personalities —we call it impertinence."

"Twenty questions," he repeated, ignoring her rebuke. "Why, I have not heard that mentioned for years. It is a favorite game in Radnor, isn't it?"

"I am sure I don't know," she said wearily; "I know very little about Radnor."

"And I less," he said. "I've been away so much of the time. But there were certain things taken into my innermost being in my youth, along with the air I breathed, I suppose, that no amount of absence will eradicate."

"For instance?" she said, with feigned interest, for her mind kept wandering off to her recent interview with Miss Ware, and she wished she had not allowed him to accompany her.

"Well, the question of residence, you know. The few acres of sacred soil in Radnor on which it is permissible to live. I remember as a little boy how my nurse only allowed me to play with children whose parents lived on the water side of Crana Street or the sunny side of Belton Avenue. Any other than those and the streets immediately intersecting was beyond the pale of civilization, even to her. It is odd, isn't it?" smiling down at her.

"What is odd, the fact or your acceptance of it?" There was a little ring in her voice which struck the man's alert ear.

A look of surprise came into his handsome dark face. "Am I walking too fast for you, Miss Dale?" he asked, pleasantly.

That was the second time he had put aside a thrust of hers with some trifling, irrelevant remark, and it tended to heighten rather than soothe her growing irritation.

"I think," she said, stopping abruptly on the corner, "that I shall say good morning to you here. I do not happen to live in that sacred locality you mention, and I would not for worlds take you beyond the pale."

"Miss Dale," he gasped, "you don't think I abide by any such nonsense—you are doing me a great injustice. Surely you are not going to dismiss me!"

"Yes," she said, smiling, and showing her dimples in a sudden access of pleasure at the thought of getting rid of him, "I really believe I am."

He lifted his hat, and stood for some moments on the corner watching her vanish from sight. How slender she was, and graceful, and what a sweet little smile had accompanied her nod of farewell! Now he thought of it, her eyes had queer lights in them, baffling, as if she were laughing at him all the time. And her tone was half mocking, too, though he had taken it

seriously enough in all conscience. Was she serious, or had he made an idiot of himself? This latter contingency was not one which presented itself with marked frequency to the mind of Kenneth Landor, and therefore gave him much food for reflection as the day wore on.

CHAPTER VIII

"WHOM in the world do we know in New Hampshire?" asked Julie one morning, glancing askance at an envelope in her hand.

"Suppose you open it and find out," meekly suggested Hester, peeping over her shoulder.

"Why, see, it is addressed to us both—it's probably an invitation or something."

"It is not," asserted Julie; "I can tell by the look of it. It's—why, Hester Dale, it's a fifty dollar bill."

"What?" ejaculated Hester.

"It is, and a note. Think of daring to trust such a thing by mail! Look at it yourself."

Hester seized both the bill and the letter, and unfolding the latter found the following mysterious communication in typewriting:

"From one some love to those one loves, Greetings:

"A conspiracy having been formed for the purpose of circumventing fate, the initial step is herewith taken in the form of the enclosed paltry bill, intending it to be the forerunner of many a happy hour in which, though absent, will be ever present THE ARCH-CONSPIRATOR."

"Whoever could have done such a thing?" queried Hester in astonishment, "Dr. Ware?"

"No, I don't think so, though he might—he is capable of doing anything. But, Hester, just think of it—fifty dollars! Why, it is almost a fortune!"

"I should think it was, and it is the kindest, most generous thing I ever heard of. It couldn't be from Virginia, could it?"

"I don't believe so, Hester. Cousin Nancy disapproves of us too much to do such a thing. I think it is from some one who loves Daddy and feels sorry for us all, and takes this way of showing it. Oh, how good people are!"

"Some people," corrected Hester.

"If it had come from almost any other place than New Hampshire it wouldn't be quite so puzzling," said Julie. "I am sure we don't know a soul in the whole state."

"Well, I say let's stop guessing and be thankful we have it," advised Hester. "It is some one who does not want to be known, and I don't suppose we really ought to try to guess, but I just hope we will get a chance sometime to do something for that somebody, whoever he is. You can see the person has had great fun doing it, by the way it is written, Julie."

"Yes." softly, still puzzling over the unexpected windfall.

"You've got another letter in your lap, Julie.

Have you forgotten its existence? It looks like Nannie's writing—do read it aloud."

Julie took up the forgotten letter, and opening it began:

"MY SWEETEST, PRECIOUSEST GIRLS" (Isn't that just like Nan?) "You owe me a letter, both of you; but it's such ages since we've heard that I just can't wait any longer. I'm *so* afraid mummie's last letter hurt you, though I wrote you at the time just not to mind anything she said. She was awfully cross and put out for several days, but father and I played backgammon with her until we actually played her into a good humor—you know how she'd play backgammon until she couldn't sit up another minute; and I know she loves you girls nearly as much as she does me, though she sputters away about you now and then; but that is just mummie's way.

"How I do wish you were here! I say that a dozen times a day, and whenever father hears me he says you will be, sometime. He's got just the loveliest scheme for bringing you all down here on a visit, since you're so proud and haughty and won't come and live with us! I shan't tell you a thing about it but you just wait until dear Cousin Dale gets better, and then you'll see!"

Julie's voice got suspiciously husky here, and it was a moment before she went on:

"We'll have the grandest old times that ever happened, just like we did when you were here before.

"Do you know I'd almost forgotten to tell you the thing I began this letter for—my birthday party. I know you want to hear about it! It was a surprise party, and such fun! To begin with, it was such a pretty day that I wanted to be out every minute, so I took a long ride with father in the morning, and spent most of the afternoon in the pasture with George Washington, he and I trying to do tricks on Gypsie the way you did, Hester. I said we were *on* Gypsie,

but it was mostly *off*, for she didn't take to our circus performance at all and threw me twice, way over her head, and George Washington no end of times. He just loved it, and capered around and grinned and made absurd remarks until my sides ached with laughing. Just as I was actually succeeding in standing up on Gyp bareback, mummie spied me from her window, and of course that put an end to everything. She said she saw no reason why I should celebrate my eighteenth birthday by breaking my neck, and I expect she was right—but oh, it was fun!

"When I came in to dress for supper, father called me one side and told me to put on my pink organdie (the one you liked so much, you know), because it would please mummie; so I did and mummie wore her claret-colored velvet and I picked two of my pet pink roses—one for Mummie's hair and the other for father's buttonhole, and we all looked very gay and festive and I thought it was lovely to be eighteen, especially as mummie had given me that beautiful pearl ring of hers which she always said I should have when I was a young lady.

"Well, about nine o'clock, when mummie and I were in the midst of a game of backgammon, there was a crunching noise out in the driveway and I thought some one was coming to call. Then I heard laughter and a lot of people talking, and father went to the door, and let in a whole crowd calling for me. I was too surprised to understand, even when father explained that the neighborhood was giving me a surprise party. (I found out afterward, girls, that he got up the whole thing—he vowed them all to secrecy, because he didn't want me to know he had a hand in it, but Lillie Blake told me—Lil never has secrets from me.)

"Well, we danced in the big hall most of the evening, while the older people played cards, and we did have a jolly time, and there was a stranger here—he was staying with the Blakes and you'd never guess where he's from—Radnor! He's very fascinating, but he's old—he must be at least thirty! I know that wouldn't seem old to you, but it does to me, and I felt very shy with him at first until I found out he

came from Radnor, and then I just pelted him with questions about you, and he didn't know you at all! I could have wept! But I talked on about you just the same, and I was dying to tell him about your work, for I think it's so noble of you, but mummie has forbidden my mentioning it to any one, and, of course, I wouldn't disobey her. He got the ring in my birthday cake, girls; wasn't that the funniest thing? Lillie Blake teased him to give it to her, but he wouldn't, and slipped it in his pocket out of sight. I know he enjoyed hearing me talk about you, because he stayed with me a good part of the evening, and Teddie Carroll got cross and sulked in the corner. Isn't he the silliest thing?

"Good-by, you old darlings, and don't forget your little cousin, NANNIE."

Julie smiled as she put down the letter. "Isn't she a darling, Hester? I don't wonder they call her 'Kitten,' she purrs so. And she's so ingenuous! Imagine her thinking that a man stayed about with her because she talked about us. He evidently took a fancy to her—the dear little thing! I wonder who he was."

"She has forgotten to mention his name," said Hester, "but it does not much matter. Come, Julie, we must switch our thoughts up from Virginia, or we'll never get to work to-day."

Julie went over to a shelf and stuck the two letters behind a clock. "It is an inspiration to work," she said, "when we know people are thinking of us and loving us. That money, dear, is a godsend. We had scarcely enough left to market another day."

Julie, who was self-appointed buyer, had been

racking her brains to know how they should get through another day without running into debt—a contingency of which they had a horror. They had stopped all their father's accounts and were unanimous in agreeing that they would go without that for which they could not pay cash. Accordingly they went without a great deal.

In her first experience of marketing Julie was aghast to find that meats which she regarded as a common necessity cost so much that she was forced to act upon the butcher's suggestion that it was "stew meat" she wanted. It was *not* what she wanted, but she took it meekly and ate it with pretended relish, for Bridget took pride in serving a genuine Irish stew.

It was characteristic of the Dales that they never did things by halves, and they threw themselves with tremendous energy into their work, which was developing, though still slowly. Orders for wine jelly and cake came in from people unknown to them, and they knew that Dr. Ware's influence was working for their good. Miss Ware, too, though outwardly antagonistic, had carried out her intention of taking Hester's cake to the Sewing Class, with the result that the hostess of the next meeting had ordered all her cake from them for that occasion.

This order they were getting to work on now, and Julie remarked that she wished white cake

were not so much in demand, for the continued increase of left-over yolks was appalling.

"Bridget has made them into omelette at least twice a day lately, until it seems to me I can't stand the sight of them, Hester. And the more we have to make frosting the worse it gets. Either we've got to throw them away in rank extravagance or keep on eating them and die. I wish we could think of something to do with them!"

"If we only could afford to buy oil, Bridget would make us some salad-dressing."

"But we can't afford it. Poor Bridget, that is her one accomplishment. She says she learned it from mamma, who was famous for it."

"Good gracious, Julie!" the practical Hester ejaculated, "don't take to 'reminiscing' with that far-away look in your eyes. You'll be weighing salt instead of sugar."

"I am not 'reminiscing'—I am thinking. Why can't we make mayonnaise and sell it?"

"What!"

"Don't drop dead with astonishment, you chief cook and bottle-washer, because *I* have an idea. What do you think of it?"

"Ye gods, but wouldn't that be a scheme! Bridget could teach us—you know how Daddy's friends always said they never got such salads at any other table!"

"Don't 'reminisce,' my dear."

"We'll get the grocers to sell it," disdaining to notice the pretended rebuke, "just as they do pickles and things. We'll put it up in nice bottles, and——"

"Wouldn't it be rather clever to learn how to make it first?" interrupting this flight into future possibilities.

"Bridget, Bridget, come here!" called Hester.

Bridget, who was brushing up the sick-room, came down the little hall and entered the kitchen.

"Do you see all those?" cried Hester, pointing to a bowl full of yolks standing on the table. "Now if you had your own way, what would you do with them?'

"Make 'em into mayonnaise, miss."

"Of course you would, you extravagant creature! Well, that is just what we want you to do. Tell her, Julie—it is your scheme."

An amazed and delighted Bridget heard the girl unfold her plan.

"Shure it's a wonder yez are, Miss Julie, the two of yez, an' my dressin' can't be beat. Could I be after showin' yez how this mornin'?"

"I'll go straight into the grocery now and get a bottle of oil," exclaimed Julie, and calling Peter Snooks, she was off in five minutes.

She noticed as she went down the stairs that

the door of the apartment underneath them was ajar, and to her astonishment Peter Snooks, that most well-behaved of dogs, thrust his nose into the crack and vanished.

She stood a moment irresolute; then called peremptorily: "Snooks, Peter Snooks! come here this minute!"

No dog appeared, and she was about to raise her voice for the second time when from the darkness of the inner hall she heard some one say—"Do you mind coming in just a minute? Your little dog is making friends with me, and I can't come to you."

She followed the voice to the front room, where a boy lay in a wheeled chair, while beside him sat Peter Snooks on his hind legs, putting out his paw to shake hands in his most approved manner. At sight of his mistress he curled his tail under and crawled to her guiltily. "Don't scold him, please," said the boy; "it's my fault. I've been wanting to know him this ever so long."

There was something so appealing in the boy's voice and so penitent in the way Peter Snooks looked up at her that she patted the little rascal, and said brightly:

"I never knew him to play truant before; but if you and he have made friends I shan't apologize for his intrusion or mine."

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"Oh no! don't," said the boy. "I've watched you from the window ever since you came here to live, and I feel somehow as if I sort of knew you."

"Are you ill?" she asked, gently.

"Broke my hip two months ago," he said. "It's a long time mending."

"Oh! I am so sorry—I know how hard it must be—my father is—is ill, too." She never could bring herself to put into words her father's actual condition.

"I wish you would sit down," the boy said. "Mother may be in any moment. You can't think how it cheers a fellow up to see somebody." He spoke hesitatingly, as if he feared to show too great pleasure lest he give her offense.

"I can't stop, thank you," said Julie, suddenly remembering her errand, "but if you are lonely and would like to have me, I will leave Peter Snooks awhile with you—he's no end of company."

"Oh! would you, really?" The boy's eyes glistened. "I wish mother were here; she'd know how to—to thank you."

At that moment a small, frail woman, gowned in black, entered the room.

"Why, mother," exclaimed the boy, turning to her a flushed, eager face, "I was just wishing

for you. This is the young lady that lives upstairs, you know."

"How do you do?" the woman said, holding out her hand with quaint simplicity, neither face nor manner betraying any surprise at finding Julie there. "You are Miss Dale, are you not? I am Mrs. Grahame. It was kind of you to come in and see Jack."

"My little dog ran in here, and I followed in search of him and found your son," Julie explained. "I really did not intend to be intrusive."

"It is a great pleasure to see you." The older woman smiled at her. "You must pardon the seeming liberty, but Jack and I have long been acquainted with you. You see I am at work down-town most of the day, and the boy spends long hours by the window watching his neighbors go in and out, and he amuses himself by weaving little stories about them until he comes to regard them as personal friends."

Jack dropped his eyes. "You'll think I'm the one who's intrusive," he said.

"I do not think anything of the kind," replied Julie; "I think it is a very clever, happy idea." She went over to the chair and called the dog up in his lap. "Mrs. Grahame," she said, "if you are not too busy, will you come up some evening and see us? We are working girls, and we have

an invalid father, and we don't expect to pay visits, but I would like to come down here again, if I may, and bring my sister. Your son would weave the most beautiful stories in the world if he really knew Hester."

"Thank you for suggesting so much happiness for my boy," said Mrs. Grahame, earnestly. "You make me want to go to see you immediately.'

Just as Hester's lively imagination was picturing all sorts of calamities which might have overtaken her sister, that individual came hurriedly in with a bottle of salad oil in her hand.

"Well, where on earth have you been?" cried Hester; "I thought you must have dropped dead or been kidnaped or something fearful."

"Was I so long? I am sorry, dear, but you see I made a call en route."

"A call! who ever heard of such a thing! Where is Peter Snooks?" suddenly missing him.

"He is finishing the visit for me." Julie laughed with a provokingly mysterious air.

Hester, who had been working on alone and diving her head into a hot oven every five minutes to anxiously watch the evolution of bothersome little dabs of thin dough into small puffy cakes, was feeling decidedly cross and resented her sister's apparent indifference to the business at hand.

"Well, I'm glad if *you* have time to gad about," she said, witheringly. "I *thought* we were going to take a lesson in making mayonnaise."

"You goose!" exclaimed Julie, pushing her away from the hot oven and herself kneeling down to peer in. "I'll watch these cakes—you sit down and draw a breath and the cork of the oil at the same time, while I tell you what happened."

Somewhat mollified, Hester obeyed, and even deigned to show interest when Julie graphically described their neighbors.

"Wasn't it odd, Hester, just walking right into the midst of things like that? And the boy was so pathetic, and his mother was so quaint, with such a sweet face and pretty, wavy hair, and I only stayed a moment, dear, really, for all the time I knew you'd be wondering what had become of me."

"Well, all I've got to say is," remarked Hester, with decided emphasis, "that if you were willing to leave Peter Snooks with them, they must be very remarkable people indeed."

CHAPTER IX

THE weeks passed rapidly to the young workers, who found each day full of experiments, sometimes developing into satisfactory results and again filled with bitter discouragement. There were days when the battle for existence threatened to overweigh and submerge them; days when from morning till night their work seemed possessed by evil demons, and everything went wrong; days when despair tugged at their hearts, and the old happy life forced itself in upon their thoughts with clamorous persistence. And ah! how they felt the sorrow of their father's helplessness, the loss of his companionship causing an ache that nothing could assuage! But through it all they fought their way, upheld by the longing to show a spirit worthy of their father's daughters, sustained by the consciousness that by their own endeavor they were "making a home for Dad." This was the dominant note of the new life—like a bugle-call stirring them to action!

Julie, who had been reading aloud to her father one day, suddenly went into the next

room to find Hester, and exclaimed, "Thackeray says, 'I would not curse my fortune—I'd make it!' I think that's great, Hester! We'll take it for a motto." And by that motto ever after they abided.

Mr. Dale had not awakened to any definite consciousness of his condition, as Dr. Ware had anticipated, but remained in a passive, tranquil state, taking little heed and no part in any conversation, though his face brightened perceptibly whenever any one entered the room. Much of the day he slept, but during his waking hours one of the girls was constantly with him, hovering about with a tender protective air.

Dr. Ware, who devoted all his spare time to his old friend, was a frequent and most welcome visitor. He was a man of distinguished presence, tall and well-knit, with the military bearing of a soldier and some ten years younger than Mr. Dale, although they had served in the War of the Rebellion together. Streaks of gray showed plentifully in his hair and pointed beard, throwing into greater contrast his black brows and blue-black eyes, while his face was marked with strong lines indicative of character. It was an interesting face and one that inspired immediate confidence, and in addition there was about him an indefinable charm which made itself felt both professionally and socially, so that there was not

a more popular man in Radnor. This was perhaps an unusual position for a man of strong convictions, expressed fearlessly and freely on all subjects. To be thoroughly popular commonly requires an adaptable temperament not compatible with strong individuality.

He watched over "his girls" as he called them, with affectionate solicitude mingled with an admiration and respect which knew no bounds. "They are going to succeed," he would frequently say to himself after leaving them, "every failure only makes them more determined —it's fine to watch the growth of such spirit." And then he would drive off on his round of visits with a preoccupied air and vague longings would steal in upon him, softening the lines about his mouth and eyes and lingering deliciously in his mind even after he had roused himself impatiently from such day-dreams.

The girls' experiments in making mayonnaise resulted in Julie's screwing up her courage one day and going to the leading grocery of Radnor. She asked for the proprietor and laid before him her scheme, at the same time showing him a sample of the mayonnaise. Poor Julie, who did not know what it meant to cry her wares in open market, felt very uncomfortable and flushed quite red as she talked; but she struggled to overcome her timidity and succeeded in interesting the

man, who told her to leave her sample for him to try at home and gave her some valuable information about putting up such an article in the regulation form, suggesting that she follow his directions and bring in the mayonnaise again, bottled and labeled for his inspection.

Busy days those were indeed in "The Hustle," for in addition to trying varieties of cake, the mayonnaise suggested making salads and one thing led to another with surprising rapidity.

It gradually began to be recognized in Radnor that if one wanted any delicacy in the way of fancy cooking, one should order it from "those Dale girls," and this recognition was in no small part due to Mrs. Lennox, the President of *the* Sewing Class. It was she who had sent them their first order and shown a marked interest in their work which was not without its immediate effect, for people occupied in their relation to Mrs. Lennox a position similar to that of "Mary's little lamb." Mrs. Lennox was a beautiful woman and in the fashionable world her word was law; but society amused rather than interested her, and her keen intellect and strong individuality led her into devious paths. Above all she was a philanthropist in that broad and humanitarian sense which sees promise in all gradations of men and women.

She followed her first order to the girls with a

second by mail; then a little correspondence ensued, in which she suggested their sending her any new thing they might be trying. A few weeks later she "blew over," as she expressed it, and said in her charming way to Julie, as if she had known her intimately for years:

"My dear, are you busy enough?"

"No indeed, Mrs. Lennox, we never could be busy enough—we want to do so much."

"So I thought." She threw back her furs and unclasping a big bunch of violets tossed them into the girl's lap. "You like them, don't you? So do I. I adore violets. I am raising white ones now and I will send you over some if I may."

"Oh, how good of you! Daddy loves them too. We always used to have flowers wherever we were and we do miss them so. I don't see how you suspected it, Mrs. Lennox."

"I am rather keen about human nature, my dear, and it occurs to me that even though you do cook, you may have a love and longing for the beautiful."

Julie smiled. It was so comfortable to talk with some one who understood them. "Miss Ware would not agree with you," she said. "She considers us lost to the finer things, beyond redemption. She dislikes us, you know, and we never go there; but she comes here sometimes

and asks us all sorts of questions and wants to know about our recipes and things as if we could not comprehend any other subject. Hester calls it 'talking shop' and we hate it—not the work but the being excluded from other things."

"I understand perfectly. Miss Ware is a bit, well, narrow, like most Radnor people. So you are not busy enough?" eyeing her curiously; "well then, I have a suggestion. If you want to cater for the town, send out cards."

Julie gasped. "Business cards, you mean, soliciting orders?"

"Exactly. You do a variety of things already —think up and experiment with more until you get an imposing little list, have cards printed and send them about—at least five hundred, I should say. Radnor is a large place and cliquey—there must be numbers of persons unknown to me who have never heard of you girls, yet would be likely to give you their custom. If my name on the cards by way of indorsement would be of any advantage, you are more than welcome to use it."

"Oh! thank you, of course it would be a great advantage, Mrs. Lennox, for no one knows us at all, you see. I'm—I'm dazed by your idea—it seems so pretentious—so bold to advertise ourselves. I don't believe we should ever have thought of it, but it *is* the thing to do."

"Decidedly. I know something about business and you have one of the most necessary qualifications for success—indefatigable zeal—and I want to push you along. But you must not overtax your strength. I suppose you have heard that before, eh, Miss Dale?" She laughed musically. "No doubt kindly disposed persons come here to leave orders and tell you not to work too hard."

"Yes, they do," Julie earnestly replied. "I wish they would not. Just as if we did not have to work with all our might and main, and it is not easy—always."

"Easy! I should think not!" Mrs. Lennox rose and smiled into Julie's grave eyes as she held out her hand to say good-by. "I am going now, but I want to come again and meet your sister too. May I? I should so like to know you and be your friend."

Julie impulsively kissed her. "It is so good to find some one who wants to know us—in spite of everything," she faltered.

"It is because of everything, my dear," giving the girl an impetuous little hug. Which demonstration would greatly have astonished the smart set of Radnor to whom this side of their leader was unknown and unsuspected.

It was about this time that the girls got the mayonnaise put up to their satisfaction, for innu-

merable perplexities had arisen in the matter of suitable bottles, corks and labels. When finally Julie had submitted the result to the grocer and that all-powerful man had ordered a dozen bottles to sell on commission, the girls felt that they were working to some purpose, and a glow akin to honest pride surged in their hearts. But the sensation swelled to overwhelming proportions when late one afternoon Julie, passing the store, spied in the great show-window a group of their bottles standing boldly alongside the firm's best fancy articles. She gasped, scarcely daring to look at them, and rushed home to tell Hester.

But when she got home she did not tell Hester. Instead she said: "Put on your things and come out before it grows dark—the air will do you good."

"Can't," said Hester, deep in a book, "I'm too tired to move."

"I want to show you something."

"Where?" reading on.

"In a shop window."

"Julie Dale, what's the matter?" she exclaimed, dropping her book. "I'm sure you've got a crazy look about you—your hat's on crooked!"

"I don't care, I think you would want to throw *your* hat in the air if you had seen it!"

"Seen what? A shop window? I hate them

—they're just full of tantalizing things one wants and can't have!"

"Well, this isn't—or perhaps it is—I am sure I don't know, but I came way back after you and oh! do come."

"You are responsible for great expectations," said Hester, reluctantly getting up from the bed. "I call it a most unchristian act to rout me out like this."

But she took another view of it when she found herself out in the brisk wintry air, and she caught some of the exhilaration of her sister's gay spirits as they went along, Peter Snooks racing wildly about them.

When they approached the window of the grocery Julie's heart beat rapidly in anticipation of Hester's surprise. As they reached it she suddenly pulled her arm and led her close to the window. "Look!" she said excitedly but in a low voice, for many persons were passing and some few stood near them.

There it was, the mayonnaise into which they had put their best endeavor, standing in so conspicuous a place that it could not fail to attract the attention of the passers-by.

"New thing, that mayonnaise, isn't it?" they heard a man say to his companion, "well put up —let's go in and look at it."

Hester gazed speechless into the window, her eyes nearly bulging out of her head.

"Would you ever have believed it!" whispered Julie, poking her. "Let's wait," as she saw a clerk lean into the window and take down a bottle, "let's wait and see if those people buy it."

"No we won't," said Hester, finding her voice at last. She clutched her sister's arm convulsively. "We'll go straight home before I scream with joy right here on the corner."

"You don't like shop windows, do you?" said Julie with a happy laugh.

In the exuberance of their spirits and with a desire to impart the good news to their neighbors, whom they now counted as friends, the girls stopped at the Grahame's on their way upstairs.

"Jack," exclaimed Hester the impetuous, "Jack, what do you suppose has happened?"

"By the look of you I should say you'd inherited a fortune."

"Pouf!" disdainfully, "that is commonplace." She clapped her hands together while her eyes danced merrily. "Try again, Jack."

"May I have a guess, Miss Dale?" said a voice that made the girl start, while a long, lazy form emerged from the corner.

Hester's manner changed instantly, and her

eyes sought Jack's questioningly, as if she were asking some explanation. Then she turned to the man who stood quietly watching her.

"How do you do, Mr. Landor?" she said with a stiff little formality that was unlike Hester, "I did not know you and Jack were friends."

"May I be presented?" asked Julie, coming forward; "I seem to be quite out of it."

Jack from his chair in his capacity of host performed the introduction.

"Will *you* let me guess?" said the man, addressing Julie as if there had been no interruption. "Your sister refuses to answer me."

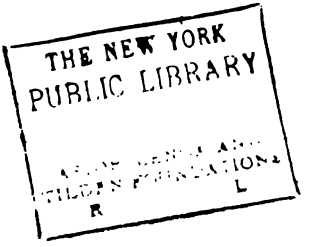
"You certainly will not let him guess," promptly replied Hester. "Curiosity is a shockingly reprehensible trait and besides," with a little toss of her head, "our affairs cannot possibly be of interest to Mr. Landor."

The man flushed and picked up his hat. "I am off, old fellow," he said to Jack. "I'll be in again before a great while."

"Oh, don't let us drive you away, please, Mr. Landor," protested Julie, who was secretly marveling over that cool little sarcastic voice which she had scarcely recognized as Hester's. "We had only a moment to stop and we can come down again any time; we know what a great pleasure it is to Jack to have visitors, don't we, Hester?"

Julie had her hand on the door.

"MAY I HAVE A GUESS, MISS DALE?"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"You will do what she asks, I am sure, Mr. Landor," said Hester. It did not escape him that she shifted the responsibility to her sister. "Julie always arranges things perfectly. We really should be at home this very minute." And waving her hand at the astonished Jack, she followed in the wake of her sister.

"Hester," exclaimed Julie, in the seclusion of their own apartment, "what made you so rude to Mr. Landor? I never heard you speak like that to any one before."

"Oh! Julie," cried the younger girl, flinging herself down in a chair, "I've the most disgusting, beastly temper!"

"You've nothing of the sort!" denied her sister indignantly.

"I have. You don't know anything about it, it's—it's just developing. I get all hot inside; sometimes it breaks out the way it did at Miss Ware's and to-day it made me nasty and sarcastic. I've always hated sarcastic people!"

"What has Mr. Landor done, dear, to make you dislike him so? I thought he seemed most charming and agreeable."

"Did you?" indifferently, leaning back in her chair. Suddenly she sat bolt upright and exclaimed vehemently, "Julie Dale, if you dare to take to singing his praises as Dr. Ware does I'll —I'll—well, I don't know what I'll do! I

hate him, with his smiling, masterful air and his prying into affairs which are none of his business." (This seemed rather strong language, but Julie did not interrupt her.) "He is an idle society man and we are hard-working girls. He has nothing in common with us whatever. We've no use for men, anyway—they don't belong to the sort of life we live, they—they don't fit into our scheme of things. Rather neat, that last phrase, eh, Julie? Read it in a book." As usual, Hester's outburst ended in a laugh.

"Are you twenty years old," said Julie stooping down to kiss the flushed face, "or two hundred, Hester?"

"I'm an end-of-the-century idiot, that's what I am!" she replied, pulling Julie over to give her a suffocating hug. Then in that irrelevant fashion so characteristic of her she threw back her head and sniffed the air suspiciously.

"Julie!"

But Julie had slipped away.

Hester chased her into the little dining-room. "Julie Dale! do I smell steak?" Hester's nostrils fairly quivered.

"You do. I plunged into that wild extravagance on the strength of the mayonnaise, and I don't care what you say!"

"Say!" gasped Hester as Bridget brought in this unheard of luxury, "I only want to eat!"

CHAPTER X

"I'M sorry, old fellow."

"Sorry for what, Mr. Landor?"

"To have driven your little friends away. They evidently had some good news to tell you."

"Oh! that's all right," said Jack cheerily, "it will keep, you know, and they were in a hurry—they said they could only stop a moment." Jack was puzzling his young brain over their abrupt departure, but his loyalty to all three friends made him wish to hide from Landor the fact that he was apparently the cause. "I'm so sorry they *were* in a hurry," he continued, "for I'm always wishing you knew one another—you'd get on like a house afire."

"Should we, Jack? I don't know. Recent events don't seem to prove it, do they?" laughing good-naturedly.

"Oh! that doesn't count. You just wait until some day when they have more time—I don't know when that'll be, though, for they're regular hustlers. What do you suppose?" confidentially. "They call their flat 'The Hustle'—isn't that great?"

"I should say so—it sounds enterprising."

"They named it after the private car they used to live in—they've told me all about it. Gee! wouldn't I like to get aboard of her once! She must have been a beauty!"

"What became of the car? Did you ever happen to hear, Jack?"

"It's out west somewhere—some railroad's got it, I think, but I'm not sure. They never spoke of it but once—I could see it went kind of hard talking about it, though Miss Hester laughed and joked about its being they who did the hustling now, instead of the car. It must be fine to be rich and travel all around," exclaimed the boy, "but I'd hate to have had it and then have to give it all up the way they have. Say, Mr. Landor, shall I tell you something?" He clasped the arms of the reclining chair with his thin hands and drew himself up to a sitting posture.

Landor nodded and drew his seat closer. He encouraged the boy in his confidences.

"I slumped the other night—clean went all to pieces. I'm fourteen, you know, but if I'd been four I couldn't have acted more kiddish. Mother was out and I'd been thinking how I wanted to go to college and couldn't, because mother can't afford it, and how I wanted to travel around and couldn't, and how I even wanted to walk and

couldn't—not for a long time yet—and I just lay here and thought there wasn't much sense in getting any better anyway—I'd just have to go back and be nothing better than an office boy where I was before I got hurt and—"

"And you succeeded in working yourself up into a fine frenzy of discontent, didn't you, Jack? I understand, my boy. We all have our rebellious moments."

"I was crying like a baby when Miss Julie came in."

"Poor old Jack," patting his hand sympathetically.

"Poor nothing!" exclaimed the boy in a tone of infinite disgust, "it makes me hot all over to think about it and that wasn't the worst! I *kept on* crying." Jack's honest nature was abasing itself before his friend. "I kept on crying till she shamed me out of it."

Landor did not speak, feeling silence at that moment would better harmonize with the boy's mood. Jack and he understood each other, and the boy feeling his sympathetic interest drew a long breath and went on again.

"She made me tell her all about it and I felt so cut up and blue that I said a lot of things I didn't mean and I told her it was easy enough for her to be brave—she didn't know what it was to lie still and perhaps be crippled all your

life—the doctor can't tell. *Think of my telling her that!*" The boy shuddered. "I believe if I'd struck her, Mr. Landor, I couldn't have hurt her more, for there's her father, you see, a million times worse off than I am, and I'd forgotten all about him."

Landor pushed back his chair and as if he found action of some kind necessary paced the room quietly while the boy talked on.

"Her face got so white and her eyes got so dark that it frightened me, but do you know what she did? I was lying on the couch and she came over and knelt down beside me and talked to me a long time about her father." Jack's voice was awed and Landor's hands went deeper down into his pockets—a way he had when he was moved.

"She called him 'Daddy' and you could see just the way she said it that she worshiped him, and she told me that when you loved a person very much it was harder to see him stricken down than if you were ill and helpless yourself. I hadn't thought of that, but it must be so, mustn't it, Mr. Landor?"

"Yes, Jack, it must be so." No cloud had ever darkened Kenneth Landor's pleasure-loving, pleasure-giving life.

"Then she told me that she wasn't brave really. That many a night she cried herself to

sleep because she was heart-broken about her father and discouraged about their work and tired. I think she just told me that so I wouldn't feel as if I were a coward because I cried too. I'd stopped by that time, I can tell you! And then she said she wanted me to help her and her sister be bright and jolly by being bright and jolly, too. That made me laugh—to think I could help them! We both laughed and I felt better. After that she talked a long time about trouble and how it came to some people very young and how it was a sort of test—did you ever think of that, Mr. Landor?" gazing earnestly into the man's face.

"No, Jack, there are many things I have never thought of!"

"You would if you knew them, you couldn't help it. She wasn't a bit preachy—I hate that —but she said the way we took things showed the kind of characters we had and when we got discouraged we must just remember we were soldiers — Christ's soldiers — that's what she said." The boy's voice sank to a whisper. "And that no soldier amounted to shucks till he was knocked about and disciplined and taught to obey his superiors."

"That is the truth, my boy." In his heart Landor was marveling at what he heard.

"And do you know what, Mr. Landor? I'm

going to march in the ranks too—a double-quick step to try to catch up with them and if ever I do catch up and can march alongside of them, won't I be proud, just!" Julie's little sermon had sunk deep into his receptive mind and kindled his imagination to deeds of valor like some knight of old. He leaned back on his cushions exhausted by this unusual talk, his frail body in pitiful contrast to the strength of the spirit that had awakened within him and glowed in his face with a transfiguring light.

Landor came over to his chair and took his hand in a grip that hurt. "I am going to enter the ranks too, old fellow," said he, carrying out the illusion partly to please the boy's fancy and partly because he had never before been so in earnest in his life.

"You!" said the boy, to whom Landor was a hero, "you don't have to fight—why you can kill buffaloes and Indians and everything!"

Landor smiled. "Perhaps I have more dangerous foes nearer at hand, Jack. Who knows? Well, I must be going. Shall I lift you onto the couch first?"

Jack always enjoyed the feeling of Landor's strong arms about him and gave the man a grateful look as he was laid gently down. The couch was in reality Jack's bed and the change to the reclining chair had been brought about by

Landor, who sent the chair to him in the early days of their acquaintance, but laughingly denied any previous knowledge of it when Jack endeavored to thank him.

"You seem to have a lot of paper about," commented Landor, picking up some sheets from the floor. "What are you up to these days?"

Jack blushed.

"Out with it, old fellow; you look guilty."

"I'm—I'm trying to write out the stories I make about the people I see out of my window. You know I like to imagine things about them. *She* said if I'd write them down the way I tell them they'd entertain her father very much, but I've gotten sort of disgusted — it seems such awful rot when it's down on paper."

Landor ran his eye over the sheets Jack indicated.

"They are not rot, Jack, they are pretty good. I am not much of a literary chap, but I know when a thing is interesting. When you have taken this way of introducing the neighborhood to Mr. Dale why don't you send him a weekly bulletin—a regularly gotten up paper with all the neighborhood news? When there isn't news you can invent it, you know," smiling; "that is allowable in the newspaper trade."

"Say, that's great!" cried Jack. "I'll call it the—'In the Ranks,' and make a great big head-

ing for my first column 'News from the Front' (that means front window) and I know that'll please Mr. Dale, for mother told me he was a distinguished officer in the Civil War and Miss Julie says they were brought up on military principles." Jack snatched paper and pencil eager to begin.

"Keep on with your stories first, Jack. Why, we shall be setting up a printing-press here next," and with this delightfully suggestive remark Landor departed.

He did not go on to the club, as was his wont at that hour, but lighted a cigar and walked out of the little court and down through Crana Street to the river, where on the bridge he paused and gazed across to the city with a rapt, preoccupied air. Then, as if the noise of the ever-whirring electric cars disturbed him, he retraced his steps and took a road in the opposite direction which brought him into the quiet and seclusion of the park. The air was keen and crisp and blew in his face in gusty whiffs as he strode on, while all about him in their winter nakedness the trees cast spectral shadows. Usually, from long training and association with western plains and mountain trails, he took note of everything as he passed, but to-night he gazed far on ahead, engrossed in thought. To his annoyance, twice his cigar went out—which was in itself signifi-

cant. Finally he threw it away and lighted a little bull-dog pipe, his solace and companion in many a solitary stroll.

So those were the Dale girls, he was thinking, of whom Dr. Ware had said so much but of whom, all unconsciously, Jack had revealed more than years of intercourse with them might tell. He thought of Julie as he had seen her, quiet and fair-haired, with that gracious little plea that he should not let them drive him away, to prevent which they had themselves made a hasty exit from the room. And then there was another Julie as Jack had pictured her, turning her heart out for a boy that he might be comforted! He thought of her with reverence. A profound solemnity possessed him, giving him a strangely subdued sensation as of a man emerging from a sanctuary. What was he to whom life was an idle pastime, that he should draw the same breath with her!

Then from out this solemn train of thought danced another picture—two baffling eyes mocking him. Who was she, this will-o'-the-wisp, that she should hold him at arm's length in that imperious fashion! He stopped and half closed his lids as if the better to conjure up a vision of her, then shook himself and went on—were not those eyes enough and that light ironical voice in his ears? Why had she snubbed him so—him,

who was surely unoffending? And she was a soldier too, marching in the ranks. That pretty, piquant, fascinating sprite had shouldered her knapsack and was fighting a battle royal. Dr. Ware had told him so long ago, but somehow he only now began to realize it since Jack had expressed it in Julie's simple way. Jove! the very simplicity of it was impressive! Thoughts like these carried Landor out into the country and brought him back to the club two hours later in an unusually quiet frame of mind. The men with whom he habitually fraternized found him dull and unresponsive and to his inexpressible relief they left him to finish the evening alone.

CHAPTER XI

MRS. LENNOX was giving one of those little dinners for which she was justly famous. To-night it was in honor of Monsieur Jules Grémond, the young African explorer who was paying a flying visit to the States. To meet him were Miss Davis, a débutante whose prettiness could always be counted on to make a picture; Miss Marston, whose cleverness it was thought would interest him; and Kenneth Landor, whose attentions to Miss Davis had been rather pronounced during the season. Opposite his wife across the round table sat Mr. Lennox, than whom there was no more delightful host.

They had not been long gathered about the table before Mrs. Lennox was conscious that her guests were lacking in that subtle attraction toward one another which is absolutely indispensable to the success of a small dinner. Monsieur Grémond, between her and Miss Marston, appeared to be listening in a most politely conventional manner to the girl who was making commonplace conversation with frequent pauses during which he turned to Mrs. Lennox, with

whom he immediately fell into interesting talk. Kenneth Landor was singularly distrait. At first he had appropriated Miss Davis with his usual devoted air, but after a bit this languished and he, too, turned so often to Mrs. Lennox, next whom he sat, that Miss Davis first pouted and then in a fit of pique plunged into a violent flirtation with Mr. Lennox, much to that person's amusement. Mrs. Lennox found it necessary to throw herself into the breach here, there and everywhere, but under her skillful manipulation the talk at last became general and animated.

The interest of the table naturally centered on Grémond, who managed adroitly to keep the conversation off himself, thereby winning the admiration of his hostess—she rather enjoyed a lion who did not roar. Finally, with the arrival of the savory which followed the dessert—for Mrs. Lennox had adopted this English custom, she had the satisfaction of seeing Miss Marston and her husband deep in talk, Miss Davis and Kenneth "frivoling" as was their wont and was herself free to enjoy a tête-à-tête with her guest of honor.

"Your country is a source of endless interest to me, Madame," the Frenchman was saying, "but it is as nothing to your women. They rival ours—even surpass them."

"I am afraid we are in danger of being told that too often," laughed his hostess, gaily.

"Some things bear repetition, Madame."

"Have you known many of us, Monsieur?" she asked, interested. "I think you said you had been over here before."

"Yes, nearly two years ago, before I started off to Africa. It was indeed the cause of my immediate start for Africa," he said with a retrospective air. "Then, too, Madame, America became very dear to me through my friendship with Sidney Renshawe—we were like brothers together in Paris."

"Ah, yes, I know, he speaks of you with great affection. He will be up from Virginia in a day or two, will he not?"

"Not before I am off. I go to New Orleans on important business and from there to California, but I shall stay with him here on my return. Ah! you cannot dream what he has been to me," he cried with Gallic enthusiasm, "he—and one other."

"Will you come and tell me about it later, Monsieur, when you have finished your cigars?" she said softly, picking up her gloves and giving the signal to rise.

"Madame is very good," he murmured, bowing low as he stood aside for her to pass.

Left together, the three men drew near and by a common interest caused Grémond to talk of his explorations for fully half an hour, which

time was all too short to his listeners, who were greatly interested in the man as well as in what he had done. Though they had just met him within the week he was well known to them through Renshawe, a warm friend of Kenneth and the Lennoxes and the half hour over their cigars would unquestionably have lengthened out indefinitely had the women not been waiting for them in the drawing-room.

The party had expected to go to the opera together, but when the men rejoined the women they found a change of plan, Miss Marston having secretly confided to Mrs. Lennox that she had been "on the go" so steadily for weeks that it would be bliss to keep still, and "Couldn't we all spend the evening here instead?" Pretty, disdainful Miss Davis, seeing in this suggestion possibilities of a prolonged tête-à-tête with Kenneth Landor, was enthusiastic in seconding it, while Mrs. Lennox acquiesced gladly—she had put in an exhausting day at various charitable organizations and was more tired than she cared to admit. As for the men, they were loud in their acclamations of delight over what Mr. Lennox called "the joy of a home evening." Accordingly they left the formal drawing-room and repaired to Mrs. Lennox's sanctum, a unique room finished in ebony, the dark wood relieved from somberness by a deep frieze of Pompeiian figures done

in red, while bits of this vivid color were everywhere conspicuous in the furnishings. In all its appointments it showed the touch of a strong individuality, and expressed in its way the æsthetic side of Mrs. Lennox's nature. It had also what in a woman's room made it distinctive—space. Mrs. Lennox was a person who liked free scope for her body as well as her mind.

The guests, therefore, distributed themselves about comfortably, and Miss Davis found herself exercising her fascinations upon the distinguished foreigner, who encouraged her by undisguised admiration, which indeed he had given her throughout dinner by glances meant to convey what the distance of the table between them made impossible to say. But the paying of excessive compliments to a girl like Miss Davis, who cares only for that sort of thing from the masculine sex, sometimes palls, and Grémbnd was just thinking a bit longingly of his charming hostess when that individual approached them.

"Miss Davis," she said, "Mr. Llandor has been proposing a game of billiards. He wants you to help him beat Miss Marston and my humble self—they have already begun to play, I believe. Will you join them?"

"Do, Miss Davis, I wish you would," urged Kenneth, who always enjoyed the game.

Miss Davis looked at him and rose by way of

answer. She had long ago discovered that her eyes did considerable execution. Then with a glance at Grémond which said that he too might follow her, she went with Kenneth across the hall into the billiard room.

Mrs. Lennox sank into a curiously carved old ebony chair, against which her bare arms and shoulders gleamed white. She was gowned in black, unrelieved except for the rope of pearls wound twice around her throat and hanging in a loose chain to her waist; but the severity of outline was exceedingly becoming to her slender figure and the absence of color emphasized the beauty of her skin, which was as fair and soft as if she were twenty instead of forty. She sighed a little as she leaned back in her chair, and Grémond reaching for some cushions from a divan near by tucked them in behind her comfortably.

"Madame is tired to-night," he said.

"Monsieur Grémond," turning her head the better to see him, "I feel as if I should offer you a thousand apologies. I had planned a gay evening for you and instead you are becoming initiated into intimate home life. We are already treating you like one of the family. Fancy!"

"A privilege not accorded to many; is it not so, Madame? I feel flattered beyond all telling."

It pleased her that he was quick to recognize

this as unusual treatment of the stranger within her gates and she said cordially, "I felt when I saw you that we should not make the usual beginning. It is a little peculiarity of mine that I steal into people's lives in the middle—when I like them. I have never analyzed it, but I trust to my instincts and I am not often mistaken. Now you," she said, leaning languidly back on her cushions, "you interest me and I've sent them all off to play billiards that we may have a quiet little talk together. I want to hear more of what you were telling me at dinner, if I may."

"Madame is very good," he said again. "We were speaking of Sidney Renshawe, were we not?"

"Of him—'and one other,'" she quoted, watching his eloquent face.

His black eyes softened and he leaned forward a little, using his hands in frequent gesticulation as he began to talk. "I am reminded, Madame, of a certain witty English author who said that Columbus discovered America but America discovered him. To paraphrase him, I should say that two Americans discovered me—dear old Renshawe and the most charming little girl I ever knew."

"Yes?" she said.

"But for those two, Madame, I might have been—anything!" He shrugged his shoulders

expressively. "The one had faith in me, the other taught me to have faith in myself. She was my inspiration." It seemed as natural to him to confide in this charming woman as if he had known her all his life, and in this he was not unlike the majority of people in whom Mrs. Lennox showed an interest, for she had that divine gift which for lack of an English word we call "simpatica"—an open sesame to all hearts.

She was listening very quietly, but the look on her face was one of absorbed attention as Gremond went on:

"For several years, Madame, I had been formulating my African plans, but I lacked distinct purpose until I knew her. She had the American idea that a man must accomplish something in the world. She thought I should prove myself capable of the great things I talked about."

"She can scarcely have reason to find fault with you now," the woman said.

"I hope not, Madame, when she knows what I have tried to do and how much more I shall do when I return."

"Are you going to tell her—soon?"

"Soon!" with a quick indrawing of his breath, "as soon as I can get to California, but alas! that will not be for many weeks. I am not sure that she will want to listen to me, Madame, but I shall make her; I must."

"You met her in Europe, I fancy?"

"On the contrary, I met her in Southern California in one of the big hotels where I was stopping. She was living there and we were thrown together constantly, laughing, dancing, riding—a gay life. Now and then when we touched on serious subjects I was amazed and moved by her great comprehension and high ideals."

"Does she not know what a powerful factor she has been in your life?" she asked.

"Not yet, Madame. I went away with my heart full of her, but said no word. I felt I had not the right on so short an acquaintance and before I had really accomplished anything."

"Perhaps not, my friend, but I am not sure that I altogether agree with you. I feel that she liked you, with possibly more than the ordinary liking, and a girl wants some sign."

"I wrote her once, asking her to hold me in remembrance; was that a sign, Madame?" "It was all I dared to make. It seemed to me it was deeds and not words that were wanted."

"It was both, Monsieur, if you will allow me to say so, for without words how could a girl know that deeds were done for her sake alone?"

"I thought she would know it all, because I loved her so," he faltered.

"Oh, you men, you men!" Mrs. Lennox cried impatiently, "how you do expect a woman to take things for granted! Forgive me, Monsieur Grémond"—leaning forward and touching his arm—"but sometimes I get very cross over it."

"Oh Madame, Madame!" he exclaimed impetuously, "you cannot think, you cannot mean I have made a mistake?"

"Indeed, no," she replied reassuringly, seeing how his confident manner had changed to despair, "but I do mean that the ways of women are not more enigmatical than those of men—*some* men," she qualified.

He laughed, glad to have the tension of the past moment broken by her light tone. For a moment neither spoke. Across the hall came the faint clicking of the billiard-balls.

"We must join the others, Monsieur," the woman said at last.

"May I thank you for the pleasantest hour I have spent since my arrival?" he said earnestly as he rose.

"The pleasantest—as yet. Eh, Monsieur?" with a charming smile.

"As yet, Madame," bowing gravely over her hand which he had taken in his.

"Then will you come to me again, when you

return and tell me *all* about it?" with a faint pressure of her fingers in his.

"May I, Madame? Ah, that will be a privilege indeed!" and stooping he kissed her hand.

A moment later they had joined the others.

CHAPTER XII

"THOSE Dale girls are certainly remarkable!"

"I have always maintained that, Mary."

"Remarkably surprising, I mean," corrected Miss Ware, fingering the coffee-cups noisily in rather an irritating manner as it seemed to her brother, who was running over his voluminous morning mail.

"What have they done now?" he asked looking up at her over his glasses.

"To my mind a most unlady-like, vulgar thing. Here it is if you want to see." A second look at a card in her hand before passing it over caused her to exclaim, "No! Is it possible! Mrs. Lennox has taken them up! Her name is actually printed on the card—it is the most astonishing thing I ever heard of!"

"If you mean their business cards, Mary, I was consulted and saw the original draft and recommended the printer. Um," examining the card critically, "he has turned out an excellent piece of work, artistic and quiet in tone. I thought he could be relied upon."

"Philip, you are too exasperating. I believe if those girls sold papers on the street corner you would think it the finest thing ever done."

"I probably should," he rejoined imperturbably. "As for these cards, they are something to be proud of! Salads, croquettes, fancy sandwiches, jellies, salted nuts, etc., etc.," he went on, running his eye down the list. "Gad! how they have pushed ahead! They mailed five hundred of these yesterday," looking over at his sister, "and I fancy Radnor people will not be slow in responding."

"Oh! Mrs. Lennox's name will be an alluring bait," she said. "People will patronize them because she does, for a time, but they make a great mistake in relying upon her; this is just one of her fads."

"I can't understand, Mary, how you take such delight in imputing disagreeable motives to people. Mrs. Lennox is not patronizing the girls—she has great respect for them. Neither are they relying on her in the least. They rely only on their own skill and ability to do their work to the satisfaction of their customers. Mrs. Lennox has kindly allowed them to add her name by way of reference or indorsement for those people who know nothing about them. It places them before the public in an unassailable position."

"Are they going to open a shop?" asked Miss Ware, a little superciliously, interested in spite of herself.

"No, they mean to keep right on as they are, making things only to order. They will have no stock on hand. It is the best they can do under the circumstances, for it is impossible to branch out to any considerable extent while their father needs them close at hand."

"Good gracious, Philip! you wouldn't advise a shop?" She made a wry face over her coffee, in which, in the excitement of the discussion, she had neglected to put any sugar.

"I don't know," the Doctor replied, stroking his beard thoughtfully, "I am not sure. Being conducted in their home, a business such as theirs must of necessity be limited, and the profits small. One must do things in large quantities to make money. I have thought a good deal about a little shop—it may come to that eventually, but I am not sure that I want it to. They are not going to hold out forever; as it is they are living on their nerves,—they have been too delicately reared to stand such work." He pushed his plate away and folding his arms on the table leaned forward confidentially. "Mary," he said, "I wish I could get you to care for those girls—to love all that is so sweet and lovable in them."

"Perhaps I'd care more for them, Philip, if you did not care so much."

"What!" in astonishment, "why you aren't—you can't be jealous of them, Mary?"

"I don't know," she replied, looking away from him, "women are queer, even we old ones—perhaps we're queerest of all!"

"Why, Mary, what nonsense to be jealous of two little girls who regard me in the light of a venerable uncle."

"I should not call a fine-looking man in the prime of life 'venerable,'" said his sister resentfully, for she was immensely proud of her distinguished brother. "I am sure it would be very odd if they did not admire you for more reasons than one!"

"It is not a question of their admiring me, Mary, but of my admiring them. And I am not the only one. People are beginning to talk about them aside from Mrs. Lennox. Mary, I want them to marry!"

"Marry!" she exclaimed. "No eligible man would marry girls who cook and deliver boxes at people's doors and do goodness knows what besides."

"You are very much mistaken, and while you cling to your absurd opinions I don't think it is desirable to continue the conversation." He rose with dignity and passed into his office.

Miss Ware followed him. "Philip," she queried with feminine curiosity, "had you any one special in mind?"

The Doctor was lost in the depths of the morning paper.

"Philip, I—I dare say I expressed myself rather strongly;" (this from Miss Ware was a great concession). "*Was* there any one special in your mind?"

"And what if there was, Mary?" answered the Doctor, slightly appeased but not wholly mollified, "would you really care to know?"

"Yes, I should. It is so unusual for you to be developing match-making proclivities."

"That is true. I seldom think of such matters and, mind you, I do not by any means think that girls should marry just for the sake of marrying—that it is the end and aim of their existence—but in the case of the Dales my heart is set upon it."

"I thought you approved of women who were self-supporting," remarked his sister, considerably surprised at the view he presented.

"So I do, when circumstances require it or their temperaments demand independence and they are properly trained to stand shoulder to shoulder with men in business or professional life. But these little girls are wrestling with the bare problems of existence, working with the nervous

tension of a high-bred race-horse, is singing up their vitality over pots and kettles and pans and frilling, smiling all the time as if they liked it!

"Why, I thought they did like it! Verily this was a morning of surprises.

"Like it!" cried the Doctor, trying to keep down the anger in his voice, "would you like it to be taken out of a life of keen enjoyment—a life crowded with incidents and continuous change of scene such as the Dales lived and helped to do in a comparatively strange place, unrecognized socially, without young companionship and, worse still, to see a father whom they adore perfectly helpless and dependent on them for every mouthful of bread? It is a wonder to me the spirit is not crushed out of them!"

"I never quite thought of it like that, Philip."

"Of course you did not, Mary. You thought they were rebellious, headstrong young things who liked being cramped up in a kitchen all day, beating their arms off over batches of dough and stirring mayonnaise until they are ready to fall into the bowl from sheer exhaustion! But I want you to look at it differently. I do indeed, and I want you to help me put a new interest in their lives."

"I will, Philip, there is my hand on it." Then Doctor clasped it warmly. "What do you think of Landor?" she said.

"Kenneth Landor? Does he know them?"

"He met Hester here one day and was immensely taken with her. Afterward he ran across them in my house in the apartment below them. There is an invalid boy there whom Kenneth heard of—you know he is always finding out-of-the-way people and going to see them. He told me he only saw the girls there a moment, but he's taken a violent fancy to the boy, who talks about Julie and Hester by the hour together. Landor wants to meet the girls again—he has asked me to ask him here to meet them, but I have always put him off on one pretext or another, knowing it was useless to try to do anything while you felt as you did, but now you will arrange something, won't you, Mary? You have such a talent for little parties."

"The girls won't come. Have you heard them speak of Kenneth?"

"Only casually, most casually. Hester always gets the talk off on something else when I mention him."

"That's a good sign."

"A good sign!" said the Doctor, much puzzled, "I thought it was a bad one."

"Oh! you men," laughed Miss Ware, "you don't know anything. When a girl does not discuss a man it is usually because he interests her. Do you think," she said seriously, "the

girls, if they knew, would like your disposing of one of them in this calm fashion?"

"Mary, I beg of you, do not misunderstand me. I have no wish to dispose of them. Kenneth may not fall in love with either of them, though I don't see how he can help it" (this under his breath), "and neither of them may care in the least for him, but it would gladden my heart if the thing could be. He is an admirable fellow in every way, and during the past month he has gone into business with his father. Did you know that? There is no doubt that he could make a comfortable home for them all. Even if nothing comes of it I want him to know them—he'll be a better man all his life for knowing them—and I want them to have a little diversion, a little outside interest to take them out of the rut. I'll leave it all to you, Mary," he ended, with a comfortable feeling of security.

"I suppose, you know," she said as she was leaving, "that both the girls have had several offers of marriage."

"No, I didn't know."

"Mr. Dale mentioned it when he was discussing the question of my chaperoning them this winter. He said he wanted me to understand that the girls were in some ways much older than their years and that having been, through their constant companionship with him, thrown

much into the society of men, it was natural they should have had that experience. He also said that neither girl had the slightest desire to marry for the present or had ever shown any preference for one man above another. I fancied from what he said that their manner toward men was frank, rather a sort of 'camaraderie' than the silly sentimental attitude some girls affect."

"You are perfectly right, Mary, they have a most engaging frankness of manner."

"May I ask you one thing, Philip?"

"Certainly," suddenly apprehensive of the question coming.

"How do you know they are beating their arms off over batches of dough"—the phrase seemed to have stuck in her mind—"I mean how did you realize it? Did they tell you?"

"Not they;" secretly relieved, "I hear it from Bridget. She worries her faithful old heart out about them and vows me to secrecy when she confides in me, for she says they would never forgive her if they knew she took it so hard."

"Good old Bridget," he said to himself, for his sister had vanished without another word, "how my little girls would scold her!"

Good old Bridget indeed, who told much, but was far too loyal to tell all she knew!

CHAPTER XIII

"HESTER, 'we have arrived,' as they say in France. This has been a momentous month. We've sent out our cards and bought our first groceries at wholesale." Julie leaned her elbows on the kitchen table and gazed with a rapt meditative air at their first barrel of sugar.

Bridget stood in the doorway openly admiring. "It's like old times, Miss Julie dear, to be seein' things come in quantities agen." She had secretly harbored a grudge against the miserable little paper bags.

Peter Snooks sniffed at the unfamiliar barrel and then sat down beside it with a comical air of importance, but Hester did not leave him long undisturbed, for in wild exuberance of spirits she executed a war-dance in which he joined, at the end of which she mounted the barrel and with arms extended made a speech.

"Ladies and gentlemen (the gentlemen's *you*, Snooks);

"This is the proudest moment of my life!"

Having delivered herself of this burst of elo-

quence she paused a moment dramatically, then plunged into such a torrent of nonsense that Bridget buried her head in her apron to stifle her laughter, Peter Snooks barked frantically in a fit of delight and Julie pulled the young orator down ignominiously.

"Come into the other room," she said. "Daddy is asleep and I don't want you to wake him."

Instantly subdued, Hester tip-toed down the hall, following her sister.

"Are we going to discuss affairs of state?" she whispered.

"No, but we must come to some decision about Mrs. Lennox's invitation for Thursday night. I think we ought to go."

"Well, I don't. I object to being patronized."

"Oh! my dear, don't look at it like that; it is not kind of you. You regard Mrs. Lennox as a friend, do you not?"

"A business friend, yes; the kindest and best we have, but that is not knowing her socially."

"No, dear, but she wants to know us socially or she would not have invited us to her house. Don't you see that is what it means, Hester? It is not patronizing us, but placing us on an equal footing—"

"Where we belong," interrupted Hester, "though I don't think we need feel overwhelmed

by Radnor's recognition of the fact." She spoke bitterly in a tone that cut her sister.

"Hester dear, it does hurt to be utterly ignored by the people who used to know us when we were children, but there are enough outside of Radnor who have stood by us loyally and we will make headway here eventually when people get a little more used to us."

"Do you suppose I care a snap of my finger about these Radnor girls," said Hester savagely. "They're a narrow snobbish lot and I'm glad I've escaped knowing them! Just yesterday, as I was delivering that great box of sandwiches at Mrs. Crane's I met Jessie Davis on the steps—she'd been calling there. Don't you remember how we always played together when we were little tots at school? Well, of course I knew her immediately—she hasn't changed a bit, and she knew me, but it was surprising how absorbed she suddenly became in looking for her carriage which was standing right under her nose! Think how disgraced she would have been before her footman if I—nothing better than a parcel-delivery girl—had spoken to her! She needn't have been afraid," scornfully, giving full vent to her smothered wrath, "I wouldn't have spoken to her to have saved her life!"

"She is not worth getting angry about, dear. You ought to pity her for not knowing any better."

"She knows better, well enough," said the irate Hester, who rather liked to nurse her wrath. "She's a nasty little snob!"

"Well, she is," agreed Julie, "but I can't help pitying her for all she has missed in not knowing you."

Hester smiled. "It is wicked of me to spit out at you, Julie dear. You did not make snobs and you have to encounter them just as much as I do. I dare say if we go to Mrs. Lennox's we shall run up against some, but a party does sound pleasant, doesn't it?"

"I think, dear," said Julie with that quiet little matronly air she unconsciously assumed when she was trying to win over her sister, "I think that even though parties are not at all in our line these days, we should go. It is not a party, really, only an informal little musicale. It will freshen us up tremendously to get into a different atmosphere and it will please Mrs. Lennox, who has gone out of her way to be kind." She looked at her sister entreatingly.

"Julie, you are a saint! Sometimes you talk just like Daddy!"

Julie's eyes moistened. "I am not a saint," she protested. "Think what Miss Ware will say when she hears of it?"

Hester's eyes gleamed. "That settles it—I

am going, and if you want to know my honest opinion, I love Mrs. Lennox for asking us."

There were many orders that week and their working capacity was taxed to its utmost to meet the demand. Had it not been for their systematic arrangement of everything it would have been impossible to accomplish so much. They had learned that the early hours of the morning are the best and got to work by six, continuing on through the day as long as there was anything to do. They had laid down stringent rules for work hours and strenuously endeavored to live by them.

By Thursday they were absorbed in the largest order they had yet received, embracing as it did croquettes, patties and other elaborate things which in an unguarded moment they had agreed to send hot to some club-rooms in the neighborhood. Hester thought they could do this by packing the things in a big steamer they had recently purchased. The steamer was a large tin affair built in sections of trays and would pack to great advantage, besides holding a considerable amount of boiling water at the bottom whereby the things could be kept hot. They had engaged an expressman to deliver this promptly at quarter past eight and it was with anxious hearts and nervous fingers they made the final preparations

for packing. The cooking of all these elaborate things had been in itself no light achievement, but even that was as nothing to their fear lest the steamer should not reach its destination safely. They had been at work since five that morning and wrapped and boxed and packed securely was the last thing when the clock struck eight that evening. Five minutes past eight and no expressman! Quarter after, and two excited girls stared at each other across the steamer! Then Hester fled to the basement. The janitor was out but she pounced upon the engineer and got him upstairs before he realized what it was all about. "You're to go on an errand," was all she had vouchsafed him, leaving Julie to explain the rest.

The man when he reached their kitchen eyed the big steamer curiously and said he could carry it. Whereupon Julie wanted to fall upon his neck with joy, but showed him the address tied to the cover instead.

"Be'gorra miss," he said in evident embarrassment, "I ain't been in the city a week. Not the name of a street am I after knowin' entirely."

Here was a dilemma.

"I'll go with him," said Bridget.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," said Julie, "you have been half dead with rheumatism for two days and it is pouring in torrents. We'll

go, Hester and I—we can get there in fifteen minutes. Hustle, Hester!"

It was an incongruous little procession that went out into the storm, the girls leading, the man keeping close to his guides, who encouraged him by a word now and then. He walked firmly and with head erect, not because this was his habitual gait, but because he had been warned that any undue motion of his body would bring showers of scalding water down his back. An admonition like this was not to be disregarded and he picked his way gingerly to the basement door of the club where the girls rang the bell and the supper was safely left in the hands of the housekeeper. Then having lavishly rewarded their cavalier two light-hearted girls rushed home through the night to Bridget.

She welcomed them as if they had returned from some great peril, petted and scolded them because of their wet things and fussed about like a hen whose goslings have swam safely back to shore.

"I've made you a pot of coffee to warm your blessed selves," she said. "It's a wonder you don't kill yourselves entirely."

"You Bridget!" said Julie affectionately as she kicked off her wet shoes, "won't you put me to bed just as if I were a little bit of a girl?" With those tired eyes and that pathetic droop to her

mouth she did not look much of anything else as she said it.

"Julie Dale! are you crazy! Mrs. Lennox's carriage is coming at nine o'clock to take us to the musicale! You've ten minutes to dress!" Hester made this announcement with a high tragedy air.

Julie jumped as if she had been shot. "I had completely forgotten it, Hester. Oh! my dear, I am so dead tired I don't feel as if I could move."

"Well, you've got to," remarked Hester, who, having made up her mind to do a thing, was not easily turned from her purpose; "you got me into this thing and we'll go if it kills us! I know I just about struck it when I called this place 'The Hustle'" she ruminated. "I am sure I don't feel as if I'd drawn a long breath since we came here!"

"What shall we wear?" asked Julie who scrambled after her sister, shedding her wet things as she went.

"I got out your light silks, dearie," came from Bridget.

"Do you suppose we ought to wear hats?" This from Hester, who was wishing they had planned their costumes the night before.

"Perhaps we ought," ruefully. "Good gracious! I haven't any—not a small one, Hester."

"A trifle inconvenient, isn't it? I might lend you the rose toque I bought in Paris."

"Indeed you won't, it exactly matches your gown and you look dear in it. I'll wear a bow in my hair or something." A bow, to Julie, always filled any discrepancy.

Hester arrested her in the act of trying this effect before the mirror and sat her down brusquely in a chair.

"Give me that bow," she commanded, "and keep still. *I'll make a hat on your head!* Bridget, you get down her picture hat quick, and rip off the tips and the band of jet and some lace and we'll fix her up in a jiffy!"

It was a wonderful creation—just a bit of lace and jet and ribbon with never a stitch in it, all fastened with hairpins to Julie's curly head. Two white ostrich tips stood up saucily at the side, a few violets were coquettishly stuck in the back and the effect was immensely modish and becoming.

"Hold your head high all the evening and don't toss it about for your life!" warned Hester. "If you do, the whole thing will fall to pieces."

"That's a cheerful prospect," commented Julie, surveying herself in the glass. "Can't you put in more hairpins?"

"You've got about a million now." Hester's imagination never failed her.

"Shure you look beautiful, Miss Julie, dear," said Bridget, "and it ain't goin' to come to pieces—Miss Hester's only teasin' yer."

Five minutes later they were rolling through the storm in Mrs. Lennox's brougham.

"Hester," whispered Julie from the depths of her luxurious corner, "*I* never tramped out in the wet to-night to deliver a club supper, did you?"

"Certainly not," squeezing her hand hard, "who ever heard of such a thing!"

Something very like a tremor of nervous excitement pervaded the girls as their names were announced on the threshold of Mrs. Lennox's drawing-room. Their entrance attracted immediate attention. Mrs. Lennox received them as Mrs. Lennox would, with most charming cordiality, yet not too pronounced lest they be made to feel that their coming was not a matter of common occurrence. She made a mental note of the fact that her protégés had never looked prettier and was immensely pleased with their poise and perfect self-possession under what she knew must be for them something of an ordeal. If she could have looked into Julie's heart she would have discovered a shyness in coming among these people that amounted to positive pain; but who would ever have suspected it from that smiling exterior and that proud tilt of the head?

As for Hester, from the moment a woman who was one of their customers bowed to her in a puzzled sort of way and then whispered so loud that every one about her could hear, "Why it's those Dale girls!"—from that moment Hester's spirit of deviltry awoke and she determined to outshine every girl in the room.

Mrs. Lennox immediately presented half a dozen men who formed a little group about them and presently she steered them all toward some chairs preparatory to settling down to hear the music. As they crossed the room several women with whom they had had business dealings, bowed to them cordially. In a corner on a tête-à-tête seat sat Jessie Davis with Kenneth Landor. Both looked up as the party approached and Landor gave a half-stifled exclamation. Hester's luminous eyes swept by the girl and into the man's face with such a distracting smile that he was on his feet in a second.

"How do you do?" she said sweetly, just the suspicion of a smile still lurking about the corners of her mouth while she extended her hand cordially.

The man took it in an eager clasp and blessed the Fates for this propitious moment. "This is charming," he said. "It is a great pleasure to see you."

"Yes, is it not?" naïvely. "Julie, here is Mr.

Landor," bringing him into the circle quite as if he were an old friend.

Genuinely glad to see him, Julie showed it unreservedly. All the men knew him and envied him his luck as the little party found seats together.

"You must not let us break up your tête-à-tête," remonstrated the wicked Hester with a glance in the direction of the divan where Miss Davis sat deserted.

Miss Davis, gazing into space, heard and bit her lip with vexation. She thought the airs the little upstart gave herself were intolerable. What could Mrs. Lennox be thinking of to bring those Dale girls into society?

But Landor did not go back to her. Man fashion, he pleased himself by becoming Hester's shadow during the remainder of the evening, though he was not allowed to monopolize her—far from it. He had to content himself with scraps of conversation, for every man in the room wanted to be presented and each found her so diverting and original that there was constantly a little crowd about her, while in the intervals of the music peals of merry laughter came from her corner of the room.

Julie, who was holding a little court of her own, could hear her and rejoice, and she was especially glad that this should be so when later

in the evening Miss Ware, escorted by her brother, entered the room. She recognized the girls and was conscious of their success five minutes after her arrival and there was within her something like envy of Mrs. Lennox who had been the first to take into the elect these social renegades.

As for Dr. Ware, he threw himself with enthusiasm into the gayety of Hester's corner, vying with the younger men in jests and laughter. Later he sauntered down the room, stopping on the way to chat with this person and that, and sought out Julie, who, though she greeted him so smilingly seemed to him suddenly remote. It was as if she had slipped away into a younger world than his and an indefinable sensation awoke within him, filling him with unrest. Partly because of this and partly because the pleasure in her evident pleasure was so great, he lingered near her, giving her that quiet, unobtrusive attention which his old friendship warranted. And Julie liked to have him near. She was glad that he smiled so approvingly upon her, happy that this little frivolity was given the additional delight of his presence. For it was all delightfully frivolous and gay, though Julie's excitement and animation were naturally somewhat tempered by her headgear, especially as every now and then when she forgot herself and nodded her

head emphatically over something, Hester would give her a warning glance. Poor Julie! the "proud and haughty" tilt became very trying, but it *was* distinguished and caused Mr. Lennox, who was most critical, likewise somewhat horsey, to confide to his wife afterward that she was a thoroughbred.

"I hope you'll have them often," he said, when the last guest had departed and they had settled down before the library fire to talk it over. "After the cut-and-dried young people one usually meets they are perfectly refreshing. I had a long talk with the blonde one—is she Julie?—during supper about Arizona. Found myself telling her all about my irrigation schemes out there. Fancy finding a young girl who understands such things! She knows that country well and gave me an idea or two worth considering."

"I should like to have them often, John, but they won't come. Their work engrosses them to the exclusion of everything; it has to be so—they need all their strength to get through the days. I understand it perfectly. Did you notice how people were all in a flutter about them? I fancy I have given Radnor something to talk about!"

"Oh! well, that is not unusual. Do you mean to say people have cut them? It seems incredible in these enlightened days.'

"It is true, nevertheless, though Julie told me the other day that their customers were showing the kindest possible interest in their work and encouraging them by renewed orders; that every one showed them courtesy and consideration in a business way, but I happen to know, though she did not say so, that there it stops. The line is distinctly drawn. None of the daughters of those women show any inclination to renew their acquaintance with the girls, though many of them were their playfellows years ago."

"Well, they're a disgrace to their sex, that is all I've got to say—I've no patience with that sort of thing!" Mr. Lennox put down a half-smoked cigar and pushed back his chair. "They were the success of the evening, Mabel, and I am proud to know them. It strikes me," slyly, "there were others who succumbed to their fascinations. Landor, for instance, and Dr. Ware—"

"Oh, he is their 'ather's oldest friend."

"And Renshawe, who displayed surprising interest in Arizona when he found us talking about it. Have you ever known him to care a hang about Arizona before?"

"No," laughed his wife, "but Sidney Renshawe always rises to the occasion when he is interested. Principally it is Virginia he talks about now. By the way, he is expecting Mon-

sieur Grémond back from California any day. Did you know?"

"I was glad to have a chance to speak to her of her father, too," said Mr. Lennox, who apparently had not heeded his wife's last remarks. "I knew Mr. Dale somewhat at the club and regretted his collapse as we all did. She had such a pretty proud look when I spoke of him, as if I couldn't say too much. I felt as if I would like to take her off to some quiet corner and talk to her by the hour together."

"So you shall, my dear. Together we will lay siege and capture them again. I should like to give a dinner for them soon."

"Oh! ask them informally when we are not entertaining," remonstrated her husband who evidently desired to monopolize them.

"Very well, dear, and if it pleases you to watch Julie's eloquent face—and I assure you Hester's is equally so—Mr. Dale shall be the chief topic of conversation. I never knew him, but it is a great deal to know his daughters, John."

Which sentiment being shared by the master of the house the mistress called the midnight session off and they went upstairs.

CHAPTER XIV

IT was a dismal rainy afternoon, and the work of the day having been finished early the girls were ensconced in their little sitting-room reveling in a well-earned rest. By the way of unusual dissipation a teakettle was hissing on the table, while the freshly filled sugar bowl and bits of lemon told of preparations for the cup that cheers. Stretched out at full length on the floor lay Hester in her favorite attitude. At her feet sprawled Peter Snooks, chewing frantically at a piece of rubber tire which was at once his solace and despair, defying as it did his most strenuous efforts to tear it to bits. Julie, who had donned a negligé and shaken the pins out of her curly hair, was buried in a book, yet with one ear alert lest her father in the adjoining room should stir and want something. Bridget, remarkable to relate, had taken an afternoon out.

Presently Julie dropped her book and curling herself into the depths of the chair was dozing off when Hester said abruptly, "There's a stranger coming!"

Julie started up and gazed about as if expecting some one to loom up before her.

"There is," reiterated Hester.

"Is what?" sleepily.

"A stranger coming."

"How do you know?"

"My nose itches," announced the younger Dale, rubbing the tip of that saucy feature.

"Nonsense! That's an old granny's reason."

"Can't help it if it is. There is only one alternative and that is to kiss a fool. You would not exactly class yourself in that category, would you?" turning on her elbow to look at her sister. "Of course if you insist—" and Hester leaned toward her.

Julie gave her a push. "You idiot! go kiss yourself in a mirror." But the doorbell rang.

Julie bounced from her chair and fled down the hall. Hester stifled her desire to laugh and opened the door on a tall, well-built man who stared as he beheld her.

"Why—this is Mr. Renshawe, is it not?" the girl said with perfect composure though inwardly amazed at seeing him. "Won't you come in?"

"How do you do—thanks—I—that is—" he stammered helplessly.

"You wish to see my sister, of course," ushering him in. "We did not meet the other night at Mrs. Lennox's, did we? but you see I heard about you afterward. I'll go and call my sister."

"Oh! no, don't, please, I beg of you. I must

apologize for this impertinent intrusion—I've made some abominable mistake!" In the hand in which he was nervously twisting his hat, Hester caught a glimpse of one of their business cards and in a flash the whole purport of his visit was made clear to her.

"I do not think it is a mistake," she said naturally. "I imagine you have come to see us on business, have you not? Won't you sit down, Mr. Renshawe?"

"Oh, may I? Thanks. Do you do business?" he gasped incredulously, glancing from the piquant girl about the pretty room where no suggestion of anything like work was visible.

"Yes," replied Hester, "all kinds of fancy cooking. Possibly you've seen our cards," she suggested in a desire to help him out.

He produced the one in his hand with the air of a guilty culprit. "Yes, I have," he confessed. "It was given me this afternoon by the manager of Heath & Co. He knows I give a good many bachelor parties in my chambers and recommended these things. But Miss Dale," he protested, "I had no idea it was you and your sister—it never occurred to me."

"Why should it?" asked Hester, "but it is, just the same, and we shall be very glad to fill your order." She went to a desk and brought forth a pad and pencil in a business-like manner.

He sat watching her with a puzzled, utterly perplexed expression drawing his eye-brows together. Suddenly as she returned to her chair opposite him he cried,

"By Jove! I know now, exactly—that's just who you are!" looking into her face with evident relief.

Hester wanted to laugh and say "Is it?" to this ambiguous remark but having assumed her formal business manner she maintained a discreet silence and waited for him to explain.

"You are little Miss Driscoe's cousin!" he announced.

"Are you the Radnor man who has been visiting at the Blake's plantation?" cried Hester impulsively, forgetting in her excitement that he was to be kept on a strictly business footing.

"I shouldn't wonder," was his smiling reply. "I've been there several times this past winter; in fact I came up from there only last week."

"Oh! did you? Long ago Nannie wrote us that there had been a Radnor man at her birthday party but she quite forgot to mention his name. Oh! I wish Julie had known this the other night! She would have loved a chance to ask you all about the Driscoes. Isn't Nannie the dearest little thing?"

"If I hadn't been a duffer, Miss Dale, I might have placed your sister immediately when I met

her, for I have had the minutest descriptions of you both, I assure you. There was something very baffling about her that night, as if I must have known her or at least seen her before somewhere, but—"

"But you did not expect to see us in society, perhaps?"

He glanced at her as if the better to understand if her tone were cynical, but her bland little smile told him nothing and before he could make any reply she said:

"I am afraid we have strayed too far from important things, Mr. Renshawe. It is shocking of me to encroach upon your time. Is there anything we can do for you in a business way?" She told Julie afterward she was quite proud of this little speech, for she had been consumed with a desire to ask him a thousand questions about the Driscoes.

Renshawe interpreted it to mean that the chat was at an end and he feared that in some clumsy way he had offended her, but she steered him into a discussion of the order he had come to leave with such a calm matter-of-fact air that he found himself consulting her about salads and cakes with an ease he would not have believed possible when he entered the room. He had never been brought into business relations with a young girl of her position and he admired exceedingly her

manner. The order having been arranged quite to his satisfaction he dismissed the subject and made up his mind to have his say in spite of the cue Hester had given him. So as he rose to leave he said:

"I hope you will forgive me, Miss Dale, if I tell you I feel quite as if I knew you and your sister and I am immensely glad to meet you. You see the Blakes took me frequently to Wavertree Hall and Miss Nannie spoke of you so often; she—"

"Dear little Nan," the girl said musingly, "how I should love to see her!"

The man looked as if he would like to echo that sentiment, but he only said as he moved toward the door:

"Will you be very kind, Miss Dale, and let Mrs. Lennox bring me some time to see you and your sister? I have so many messages from Virginia, for Miss Nannie was confident I should meet you and you see she was right."

"Indeed you may come," said Hester frankly, "we—we do not receive many visitors, but I know Julie will be glad to see you—I shall too," genuinely, and not as if politeness prompted this after-thought.

"Thank you. For the next few weeks I am owned body and soul," smiling, "by Jules Grémond who is stopping with me. Perhaps you

know of him, Miss Dale? He's made considerable of a stir since he came out of Africa. An old chum of mine whom I think you might enjoy meeting—perhaps after awhile you will allow me to arrange it."

Hester always says she acted like a fool at this juncture and stammered out some unintelligible reply, and that he immediately departed, she thinks without any special consciousness of her idiocy—or at least she hopes so, for she frankly confesses she was in no state of mind to know. However that may be, the door had no sooner closed after him than the dignified junior Dale, caterer, became metamorphosed into an excited young girl who flew down the hall to the room where her sister had taken refuge.

"Come back to the sitting-room where we can talk without waking Daddy, quick!" she cried, pulling Julie down the hall. "Now what do you suppose?" when they had reached the little room.

"Some one has left an extra fine order," seeing several pieces of paper clutched nervously in Hester's hand.

"Don't be so everlastingly material!" pinning the papers with a vicious stab to the back of the chair. "It has nothing to do with work, whatever—that is not exactly. Oh! do guess who has been here—and who *is* here?"

"Hester, are you hiding some one to surprise me?" looking eagerly about. "I know it is a man—I heard him. It can't be Dr. Ware; it wasn't his step. It's—it's—oh! Hester Dale, is it cousin Driscoe?"

"You're getting hot," cried Hester encouragingly, reveling in her sister's excited curiosity.

"Tell me this minute," demanded Julie, shaking her. "What other man would be coming here?"

"Well, there *are* others," laughed Hester, teasingly. "Mr. Renshawe, for instance."

"No!"

"Honor bright! And who do you suppose he is?" mysteriously.

"Don't be so tantalizing! What on earth do I know about him?" wrathfully.

"Well, you ought to. He hung around you the whole evening at Mrs. Lennox's, you know he did. I simply wasn't in it. I don't believe he even knew I was there!"

"You idiot! I had no personal talk with him whatever. As for you, you flirted shockingly with Mr. Landor. I was astonished at you!" severely.

"I *was* nice to him, wasn't I?" admitted Hester, "but that was all for Jessie Davis' benefit."

"So I thought, you depraved wretch! Will

you kindly tell me what all this has to do with your present excitement?"

Hester sat on the edge of her chair and delivered her next speech in italics.

"Mr. Renshawe is the man who went to Nannie's party and got the ring in her birthday cake!"

"Not really!"

"And he came here not knowing who we really were, because the manager at Heath's gave him one of our cards and recommended us as caterers. You ought to have seen him, Julie! He was embarrassed almost to death and I felt flustered myself, to say the least, but we managed to get through the business part nicely and then at the end he just floored me!"

"Hester!" Words other than ejaculations seemed to have failed Julie.

The younger girl came over and stood in front of her to get the full effect of her next speech, the most important piece of news, which she had had hard work to keep until the last.

"Jules Grémond is in this country, staying with Mr. Renshawe now," she said.

Julie was rendered wholly inarticulate, but the color spread in a crimson wave over her face and she made a grab at her sister, pulling her down beside her.

"You are guying me!" she cried when she could speak.

"It is the solemn truth; 'cross my heart, hope to die,'" maintained Hester dramatically. "Moreover the things Mr. Renshawe has ordered are for a tea he is giving for Monsieur Grémond to-morrow and the Fates decree that we shall tickle the palate of the distinguished African explorer with sandwiches and things! Oh! Julie, what a funny world!"

"How do you know he is distinguished?" asked Julie, clasping her hands behind her head that her nervous fingers might not betray her.

"Because I do. Mr. Renshawe as much as said so. I wouldn't have believed he had it in him, would you?"

"I don't know; we really hardly knew him well enough to judge."

"Umph! I don't know about that. What do you suppose he is doing here, Julie? Do you think he'll look us up?" hesitatingly.

"Of course not," with more asperity than the innocent questions seemed to justify. "He will never dream of our being in Radnor. You know we had been some weeks at the hotel in Los Angeles when he came, and for all he knew we might have been going to spend the rest of our days there. Probably he has ceased to remember that we exist—a man would find his *affaires*

du cœur rather clumsy baggage in the wilds of Africa!"

"If he carried them all, yes. One or two might be consoling," suggested Hester airily.

"Oh! bother Jules Grémond! I don't want to think of him! He belongs to a life that is past!"

"Well, it is queer, anyway," insisted Hester, "and I want to scream with laughter when I think of a divinity like you—didn't he call you a divinity, Julie?—coming down from your pedestal to cater for his serene highness, the one and only Jules Grémond!"

There was something so inimitable about Hester's manner coupled with the graphic picture she drew that Julie went off into a paroxysm of laughter that ended in hysterical sobbing which Hester put an end to by shaking her vigorously.

"You are so funny," said Julie faintly, wiping her eyes. "You are most as funny as the situation!" and then she buried her face in Hester's arm and laughed again.

"Shut up!" said Hester with more force than elegance for she was getting frightened at Julie's unusual behavior. "Stop this minute or you'll go all to pieces and besides, I've an awful confession to make!"

"Oh! not anything more," protested Julie,

leaning back exhausted. "My dear, don't! Another shock will certainly be the death of me!" piteously.

"Well I'll die if I don't get it off my conscience, so there you are!" cried Hester, thumping down in Julie's lap and beginning to finger the hair that strayed in little curls about her temples.

"Go on," resignedly from Julie.

"Playing with your hair? I know you love to have me do it so you need not put on such a martyred air."

"Go on with your confession, you goose!"

"Well, I told Mr. Renshawe he might come to call on us. You see he asked if we would let Mrs. Lennox bring him and he was so nice I couldn't refuse."

An amused smile crept into Julie's eyes. "I thought we had nothing in common with men whatever—that they did not fit into the present scheme of things—that we had no use for them in the life we live! *Wasn't* it some such explosive theory you expounded to me ages ago?" she asked teasingly.

"It is true, you know it is," pulling Julie's curls to emphasize her words, "but I did it for Nannie's sake. I know he is just dying to come here and talk about her."

"You mean you are just dying to have him!

So am I, for the matter of that. Won't it be nice to hear all about them?"

"Do you know something?" said Hester who had a trick of beginning a speech with a question, "I believe he is in love with her!"

"What gave you that idea, you precocious infant?"

"Oh! nothing special, only the way he looked when her name was mentioned and his wanting to come here to talk about her—there is no other possible reason why he should want to come—and he got the ring in her cake you know. Wouldn't it be romantic if she married him?"

"Hester Dale! The way you allow your imagination to run riot is something perfectly fearful! You put one and one together and make a thousand things! I never saw such a girl!"

"You are not cross, are you, Julie? You don't think I did wrong to say he might come?"

"Of course not, you baby, I think you did perfectly right. Now go and make me a cup of tea if the kettle has not boiled dry. We need a brace after all this excitement."

Hester busied herself with the tea things and Julie sat staring at her, wrapt in thought. If Hester was conscious of this preoccupation she gave no sign, but hummed a gay tune and talked to Peter Snooks, who came and sat pressed close to her knees in true dog fashion.

"Do you know, Peter Snooks," she said speculatively, "we have one very important feature in common—our noses." At this he thrust his up in her lap. "Yes," she continued, patting him, "we have. Yours denotes your state of health—mine the arrival of a stranger within our gates. A certain proud and haughty person jeers at mine but you know how it is, don't you, old man?"

The dog pawed her lap by way of showing that he understood perfectly and with his big eloquent eyes fixed on the sugar bowl, thrust out his tongue suggestively.

"What! is that sensitive too! Oh! you scalawag!" and she tossed him a lump of sugar.

This conversation had stolen in through Julie's reverie and she pulled up her chair and leaned over to her sister as she took her cup of tea.

"I dare say I did jeer at that saucy nose of yours," she began, "but in token of my future awe and respect I am going to kiss it now," suiting the action to the words. "It may be a precaution against its owner's kissing me as an alternative in the next emergency! Peter Snooks, I call upon you to witness that I hereto set my seal," with another kiss, "having at this moment solemnly declared that I consider the aforesaid feature infallible."

CHAPTER XV

RADNOR society was all agog over the second appearance of Monsieur Grémond, and no sooner was his coming made known than Renshawe was fairly deluged with invitations for his guest.

Miss Ware took that occasion to give a big reception to which magnanimously, "those Dale girls" were invited. This was the only outcome of the after breakfast talk many weeks before with her brother. To tell the truth, the interest in them kindled at the moment by his enthusiasm, waned, and she never arranged the little party for which he had told her she had such a talent. Not that she altogether meant to waive her promise; she compromised with her conscience by telling herself that she had not yet gotten around to it. Here then was her opportunity and the girls were invited to the reception not only by card but personally. She only succeeded, however, in extracting a half promise from them to come, for they were having an anxious time over a new departure in their work and were little inclined for social dissipation.

Kenneth Landor gave a stag dinner at his club

in honor of the Frenchman on the night of his arrival and Dr. Ware entertained Renshawe, Grémond and Landor at the same place later in the week, dining them informally before his sister's reception. Dr. Ware greatly enjoyed the society of younger men, who sought him in many capacities and as a counselor found in his quick comprehension of their difficulties many a solution of problems which to the young so often seem insurmountable. Then it was that the wisdom grown out of his vast experience of life gave itself freely to those who came to him, and many a man and woman left his presence cheered by the grip of his hand, strengthened by the kindliness that looked out from his eyes and pervaded his whole personality. On his lighter side, as a delightfully congenial companion, he had no equal in Radnor and this rubbing up continually against a younger point of view tended to freshen his mind and keep him in touch with much that otherwise, through the exigencies of his profession, would have escaped him.

"I do not want to seem inhospitable," he was saying that evening as the four men sat together at dinner, "but we must not linger too long over our cigars, or my sister will hold me responsible for keeping you away from her." He had his own reasons for wanting to arrive fairly early.

"In that case we'd better move along, Lan-

dor," said Renshawe rising. "Dr. Ware," turning to his host, "will you take Grémond with you or wait a few moments while we look in at a committee meeting upstairs. We will not be long if you both care to wait."

"I am in the hands of my friends," said Grémond.

"We will wait, by all means," replied the Doctor, consulting his watch. "It is not much after nine now."

Thought transference was a psychological phenomenon over which Dr. Ware had pondered much, and a startling instance of it was borne in upon him when after the other men had departed, Monsieur Grémond turned to him and said abruptly, without any preamble:

"May I ask, Dr. Ware, if you know in this city a family of Dales? In particular a Mademoiselle Julie Dale?"

"Why yes, I believe so," said the Doctor who was nothing if not non-committal, "do you?"

He was totally unprepared for the effusive manner in which the Frenchman literally fell upon his neck, exclaiming, "Oh! my friend, I thank you, I thank you!"

Masculine demonstration is not particularly pleasing to a man of Anglo-Saxon blood and Dr. Ware, in order to prevent a further exhibition of

it, drew away slightly and offered his guest a fresh cigar.

Monsieur Grémond shook his head. "I will not smoke—I will do nothing but ask you questions—if I may. Oh! you cannot think what it means to know I have found her!"

"Have you been searching for Miss Julie Dale?" asked the Doctor, puffing clouds of smoke into the air.

"Searching? Ah, if you but knew! I have been across your continent to California only to learn that she had long ago left there and come to your eastern coast, presumably here, though no one at the hotel knew definitely about her."

"You are especially interested in Miss Dale, I take it," said the Doctor quietly. "In that case perhaps I should tell you that I stand somewhat in the relation of a guardian to her and her sister. You may talk quite frankly with me if you care to do so."

It was impossible to restrain or even resent the hand-shake with which the younger man expressed his appreciation.

"The Fates have been kind!" was his exclamation. "I am rewarded for my bitter disappointment. Is Monsieur Dale dead?" he asked suddenly.

"Not dead, but so ill that he is no longer able

to look out for their interests—the privilege, therefore, devolves upon me."

"I wish to marry Mademoiselle Julie," said the Frenchman with a directness Dr. Ware liked. "I came to this country chiefly for the purpose of taking her back with me. I knew them at Los Angeles two years ago and Monsieur Dale liked me—at least I do not think he disliked me, for he allowed me to be much in his daughters' society. I realize that to you I am quite unknown, but Renshawe will vouch for me and any questions you may care to ask about my family or my future I shall be most happy to answer."

"Thank you." There was silence for a moment and then the Doctor said slowly, "Have you reason to suppose that Miss Dale will marry you?"

"Ah! that I do not know,—but she will—she must! Our intercourse was so perfect that life without her is incomplete. And she seemed always very happy with me. Has she never spoken of me or those days?"

"I think not," replied the Doctor, remembering that according to his sister that was in a man's favor. "But it is not at all unnatural," he hastened to say kindly, "we have gone little into the past since they have been living here—for many reasons."

"Will you tell me where they live and have I your permission to call on them to-morrow?" asked the Frenchman eagerly.

"Better than that, Monsieur, Miss Dale and her sister will be at my sister's reception this evening. It will give me great pleasure to see that you meet her at once. Many changes have taken place since you last saw her, but of all that she will prefer herself to tell you. You will find her developed from a winsome, lovable girl into a noble young woman whose attractions in every way are greater—"

"Not greater than when I knew her—that cannot be possible," interrupted the Frenchman. "To think that within the hour I shall see her! How can I express to you my intense gratitude for all this?"

"By making her future all she has a right to expect from the man to whom she entrusts it," said the Doctor earnestly. "For the rest, we will talk things over more thoroughly in a day or two. I think," he said rising, "that Renshawe and Landor have forgotten us. Suppose after all we go on and let them follow at their leisure."

And Monsieur Grémond readily assenting, Dr. Ware called a cab, which soon left them at his door.

The house was already crowded and Miss Ware gave her brother a look of displeasure which she

considered his tardy appearance merited. It was not more than a fleeting frown, however, for Monsieur Grémond followed close at his heels and what hostess could fail to wreathe her countenance in other than most charming smiles to greet so distinguished a guest! Dr. Ware presented a number of persons to him and saw him well launched before he left him to go in search of the Dale girls. He rubbed up against Kenneth Landor presently and secured his aid as a scout to reconnoiter, for in his semi-capacity of host he found it difficult to ignore the people about him in pursuit of two elusive young women.

Kenneth appeared at the Doctor's elbow in the course of half an hour and confided to him that they were nowhere visible—"upstairs or downstairs or in my lady's chamber." He wore such a dejected look that the Doctor laughed and asked him why he wasn't up to his old tricks—weren't there dozens of pretty girls in the room? Kenneth merely raised his eyebrows expressively and the Doctor laughed again and reminded him that suspense was stimulating. Then he bethought him of Monsieur Grémond and discovering that individual, answered the questioning look in his eyes with an encouraging nod and managed to go over and say, in spite of the people by whom the Frenchman was surrounded,

"She has not come yet but you shall know the instant she does."

When an hour passed and they did not appear he accosted his sister who was still standing at her post receiving.

"Where are the girls?" with difficulty getting her attention.

"Girls? what girls? It seems to me there is no lack of them."

"I mean the Dale girls. Didn't you send the carriage for them as I directed?"

"Of course I did. They—how *do* you do, Mrs. Smartset—and Mr. Smartset, charmed I'm sure."

The Doctor stood back and patiently waited while an influx of guests passed before her. When an opportunity offered he spoke again.

"They are not here, Mary. If you can give me a moment I would like to know why."

"You wouldn't have me neglect my guests to discuss those Dale girls would you? *Must* you be going, Mrs. Marston, and your daughter too —so good of you to come—goodnight. They are not coming," she said in an aside to her brother, "the carriage came back with a note. I had no time to read it and I do not remember where I put it. Now for pity's sake go and look after people and don't worry me any more about

them! Ah, Mrs. Lennox, this is really charming to see you," as that individual entered.

It was no easy matter to escape to his office but Dr. Ware did it and sent for Kenneth.

"I have just learned that my little girls are not coming," he said when Kenneth had joined him there. "I fear, my boy, that something is wrong and I am off. If people miss me say I was called away to a patient. Every one knows I am not to be counted on socially. Then there is Grémond. He knew the girls long ago and has been looking forward to meeting them tonight. Tell him they were prevented at the last moment from coming and give him their address so he can call if he likes." It was characteristic of Dr. Ware that he left nothing undone.

"You are not apprehensive of anything very serious, are you?" asked Kenneth who himself felt more concern than he cared to show.

"No, no; why should I be? They may merely be tired out and have gone to bed or they may need me—I can't take any chances where they are concerned, my boy."

"Of course not," said Kenneth with unusual emphasis. "If you are going to walk over, Doctor, I'd like to go along with you."

"Take you away from the festivities? Nonsense! The girls in there would never forgive me!"

"Oh! hang the whole business! I beg your pardon, Doctor, I forgot it was your sister's function."

The Doctor laughed. "Come along with me. You need ozone to restore your placidity, but go back again later, like an obliging chap, if only to give my message to poor Grémond."

They had been swinging along for several blocks in the cool night air when Landor broke the silence by exclaiming savagely, "What in thunder has Jules Grémond to do with them!"

"With the Dales?" asked the Doctor innocently, inwardly amused at Landor's resentful tone. "He met them in California, I believe."

"Umph!" grunted Kenneth.

"Here we are," said the Doctor presently as they reached the house, "and there are lights in their rooms, so they are up about something and it is well I came. Goodnight, and thank you for walking over with me, Kenneth."

"Dr. Ware," said the younger man wistfully, detaining him a moment on the steps, "if there is anything wrong up there," with a motion of his head toward the top story, "you'll let me know, won't you? And if I could be of the slightest service you'll call on me without hesitation, won't you? Of course I know they've no possible use for a chap like me but I'd move

heaven and earth to do anything—to feel that I was really of service to them in any way."

"You could not be better employed, Kenneth," said the Doctor, looking down on him affectionately. "I shall remember what you say and I like you the better for saying it. Good-night."

Dr. Ware hastened into the house and up the long flights of stairs leading to the Dales' apartment and knocked at the door, hesitating at so late an hour to startle them by ringing the bell. Evidently they were expecting him, for steps came down the little hall and the door was opened almost immediately by Bridget.

"The saints be praised!" she exclaimed, "but it's the Doctor!"

"You were expecting me, of course, Bridget," as she helped him off with his coat.

"Bless your heart but I can't say as we wus, sir, glad though they'll be to see your blessed face."

"Of course I would come. Don't they know that by this time? Who is ill? Is the Major worse? I should have been here long ago had I not been expecting them at the house every moment."

"They ain't ill, sir, they're workin' ", was her reply. "Maybe you'd better come right out to the kitchen an' see for yourself their carryin's

on. We're all at it to-night an' it's the fearful time they've had but it's all plain sailin' to the end now," she wound up hopefully.

Somewhat mystified, Dr. Ware followed and stood speechless on the threshold of the kitchen. For there were the girls in their cotton gowns with sleeves rolled up to the shoulders working away at what were to him inexplicable things, while over in a corner sat Jack half buried in a pile of small white boxes. The whole room presented the bustle of eleven in the morning rather than eleven in the evening.

"You bad Dr. Ware," said Julie playfully when she saw him, "what made you come?" She stopped her work a moment and whisking her apron over the chair Bridget had drawn out for him, motioned him to sit down. "We're just daubed with frosting from one end of the place to the other, but we can't stop working a moment, so if you dare, risk a chair?"

The Doctor sat down. He would have taken the chair with the same equanimity if it had been caked with frosting.

"Now what does this mean, at this hour?" he said.

"Didn't Miss Ware get our note? Oh! I am so sorry. We are terribly sorry to miss the reception, aren't we, Hester?"

"Um-um," said Hester absorbed in making

THERE WERE THE GIRLS IN THEIR COTTON GOWNS

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elaborate frosting designs on small pieces of cake.

"We wrote her," continued Julie, "that we were detained by our work and I suppose if she did not get it that you thought when we did not appear something was the matter with Daddy. What a shame you had that anxiety for nothing!"

"You must go straight back," said Hester. "We are getting on famously and you must not miss another minute of the reception."

"You want to get me out of the way, I suppose, so you can keep up this orgie until all hours. I know you, you minx! I shan't budge until I know all about it so you may as well begin." He surveyed the group with a smiling imperturbable manner that was impossible to withstand. Jack, gazing at him out of the corner of his eye, thought he had never seen so splendid a gentleman and indeed his evening clothes became the Doctor tremendously so that he had never looked more handsome nor distinguished than at that moment as he sat among them leaning back in the kitchen chair.

"It is all this wedding-cake," said Hester disgustedly. "It has acted like Sam Patch!"

"It is the first we have ever done," explained Julie. "We took an order for two hundred boxes of cake and a big loaf, all for a wedding,

and we made the cake a month ago. Oh! such a time as we had! You see, we are such ignoramuses that we have to wade through endless wrong ways before we discover the right one and we thought we had all the loaves properly frosted to cut for the boxes; but when we tried to cut the slices all the frosting fell off and so we had to begin all over again. Then we decided it would be better to cut the cake up into pieces for the boxes first and frost each one separately and—"

"*We* didn't any such thing!" interrupted Hester. "That was Julie's brilliant inspiration and she worked out all the frosting designs too. The big loaf and the bride's cake are perfect beauties. Did you know the bride's cake always had a ring and a thimble and a coin hidden in it for luck? Just look at the cakes over there," waving her hand toward a side table, "aren't they distinctly professional? Julie's been hanging around caterers' windows with her nose pressed against the glass studying their fancy frosted show pieces until I wonder she hasn't been arrested for a suspicious character. Of course that childlike and bland countenance of hers was greatly in her favor but," resignedly, "I was prepared for the worst."

"Miss Hester will have her laugh," said Bridget, "but 'tain't no laughin' matter this job they're putting through!"

"Now Bridget, you keep still," expostulated Julie. "She has been scolding us all the evening," to Dr. Ware, "and frightening poor Jack to death, hasn't she, Jack? Jack came to bring Daddy's paper, you know, which he prints in great style since Mr. Landor has given him a printing press, and when he found we were busy he begged so hard to come out to the kitchen and help that we just had to let him. He's been helping Bridget cut paraffine paper into squares—for each piece of cake has to be wrapped separately before it goes into its box—and they have cut all the white ribbon into pieces the right length to tie around the boxes and now they're uncovering the boxes and getting them ready for the cake as soon as the frosting dries. Jack has been invaluable, hasn't he, Bridget?"

"Humph!" grunted Bridget, with whom, nevertheless, the boy was a prime favorite.

"Good heavens! Julie," cried the Doctor, "does one little box of wedding-cake mean all that?"

"Two hundred do," smiling, "but another time we'll know better how to go at it."

All during this conversation she and Hester had been bending over the big work-table making curious evolutions with frosting bags over the pieces of cake spread everywhere about the

room. Presently Hester dropped her bag and sat down.

"Well," she exclaimed, "I believe they are done—that part. Dr. Ware," turning to him suddenly, "doesn't it strike you as funny that instead of disporting ourselves gayly in the festivities of the town we should be wasting our youth and beauty—doesn't that sound just like a book!—our youth and beauty over aggravating old things like these?" with a disgusted look at the wedding-cake. "You do not seem to laugh but I think it's tremendously funny. Dear me!" to the air, reflectively, "how trying it must be to get on without a sense of humor!" Then with an entire change of tone, "We did want to go awfully, especially as we had a suspicion that some one might be there. I wonder," dreamily, "if he was."

"I fancy so," said the Doctor, hardly knowing whether or not to take her seriously. "Come back with me now and find out."

"Can't," said Hester, "but you might be an angel and tell us if we knew any one there."

"Let me see, there was Landor—"

"Oh! bother Mr. Landor!" with a toss of her head. "He's omnipresent!"

"Um," thought the Doctor, "I've struck the nail on the head." Outwardly he said, "Then there was Renshawe,—you know him, do you

not, and a guest of his who was tucked under my wing—apparently for protection against the wiles of the women who are trying systematically to spoil him with adulation."

"I know him," said Hester, "that is Monsieur Jules Grémond.

"Yes," replied the Doctor, "I thought you would guess. He told me he knew you girls and I believe he is hunting my house over for you at this moment." He was talking to Hester but watching Julie narrowly.

"There! Julie Dale," exclaimed her sister triumphantly, "what did I tell you! I knew he would not forget us. She swore, Dr. Ware, that he would have forgotten our very existence and I vowed that he carried her image around on his heart and all sorts of high-sounding things. Shouldn't wonder if they were true, too," to Dr. Ware confidingly, "and you needn't blush so furiously about it, either, Julie Dale?"

"I am not blushing," protested poor Julie who was crimson, "and I'll have Bridget carry you off bodily if you don't stop talking such nonsense. Don't you mind what she says, will you Dr. Ware?" pleadingly. "She would rather tease than eat any day."

Julie's embarrassment did not escape the Doctor and there was a twinge of pain in his heart as he said to her gently, "She is a naughty

little girl, Julie, but she is right when she says your old friend Monsieur Grémond has not forgotten you. He inquired with great interest about you all and asked my permission to call upon you."

To this Julie made no reply and for some moments there was silence, when at last Hester sidled up to her and in her most wheedling voice said, "Forgive me, please, I did not mean to be naughty."

Julie gave her a hearty kiss and in the laugh that followed they all joined, even including Jack, who had found the situation almost painful a moment before when he thought his adored Miss Julie's feelings had been hurt. Perhaps the good Doctor did not laugh with his accustomed zest but if so no one detected it, least of all Hester who gave him a big hug by way of magnanimously forgiving him for being cross to her and said emphatically:

"You *must* go home. Miss Ware will be having a thousand fits, not to mention all the guests who are probably looking everywhere for you."

"I have been called out to see a patient," replied the Doctor. "Every one knows it by this time, only they do not know that instead of one I find four," with a sweeping glance that embraced them all, "and not an inch do I stir until

I see this case through. So you might as well make up your mind to put up with me and I want something to do. Come, Jack, show me how to take hold with you. I needn't be condemned as utterly worthless just because I am a man."

In spite of their protestations Dr. Ware was as good as his word, busying himself in Jack's corner, and with so many hands the work went forward swiftly. It was all smooth sailing now, as Bridget said, for the critical and difficult part was done and the next two hours in which the little group sat about the kitchen table wrapping, boxing and tying the cake was immeasurably shortened by Dr. Ware, who told them interesting anecdotes, experiences of his life that made Jack long to have the night lengthen out indefinitely. But that which the Doctor most dwelt upon, knowing well it was what the girls most liked to hear, were stories of the days when he and Major Dale fought side by side for the Union of the country in that war which was as much of a reality to these girls as if they had taken part in every military engagement.

And Dr. Ware went home in the wee small hours with his mind in a tumult of thought. Distress that the girls had had such a night of it formed only a part of his disturbance, for above this fact, which in more tranquil moments would

have been pre-eminent, was the consciousness that a new and central figure had arisen on the scene—yesterday a stranger to him, to-day the hero of a drama which was to the Doctor as his very life.

He sat a long while in his study when he reached home, pondering over the future and the change that seemed imminent to the girls and he wondered what the outcome would be should Grémond take Julie's life into his keeping. Was he worthy of her—*was* he? How on so short an acquaintance could he tell? And did she love him—*did* she? Beset by all these unanswerable questions he paced up and down the room, his slow measured tread like an accompaniment strengthening the minor harmonies in which his thoughts that night were set.

His Julie! His little girl! Ah! she was no child to choose her lover lightly and if she loved him, trusted him to make her future, all would be well. He thought of her as he had left her, sweet and dainty in spite of the little dabs of sugar and frosting that stuck to the quaint blue apron which nearly covered her from head to foot. He remembered her embarrassment when Grémond's name came up and kept that picture of her long before his eyes as if to accustom himself to this new aspect. He remembered too how flushed her cheeks were over the work and

the tired shadows under her eyes told him plainly enough the relentless demand she was making upon her strength. Gad! those girls had been working eighteen hours at a stretch! Eighteen hours! It wasn't the first time, either! And he, who would give his life to make things easier, was powerless—to another man would be given the right! Good heavens! Did Grémond realize his privilege? As if suddenly weary the Doctor flung himself down in his chair and heaved a sigh. Presently his lids drooped heavily. When he opened his eyes the room was flooded with sunlight.

CHAPTER XVI

THE order for the wedding-cake which had been a cause of such tribulation to the girls had come through Mrs. Lennox for a young cousin of her husband's in whose marriage she was much interested. The order consisted of a bride's cake, a round wedding-cake, two hundred boxes and in addition some thirty dozen small assorted cakes to be served with the supper. The bride's mother had given the girls a fruit-cake recipe which had been many years in her family and had asked them to make the cake at least a month before the wedding that it might "age," as the saying is. Hours easily counting into days had gone into the preparation of the fruit alone for this large order before the work of putting the cake together began; and then to make the twenty loaves, each of which when done resembled in size a two-quart brick of ice-cream, it was necessary to mix and cook the dough in installments. But as Julie told Dr. Ware, that was as child's play to the intricacies of the frosting and the catastrophe that ensued; and the nervous as well as the physical strain of that, coming on top of all the rest of

the work which the order entailed, told severely on the girls, especially Julie, though she was up with Hester at six the next morning packing the boxes into the wooden case which was to take the cake to its destination.

The round loaf over which Julie had expended so much anxious thought was wrapped in sheet after sheet of cotton wadding to protect the elaborate frosting from breaking, and resembled when laid in its box a small-sized snow drift. Hester printed "handle with care" in so many places on the wooden box cover that the expressman when he came could with difficulty distinguish the address; while Bridget cautioned him with such emphasis to carry it "like it wuz a baby, shure," that the man finally turned on her and asked if she thought he played football with his packages. It was an intense relief to them all when he had carried down the boxes and driven away, though their suspense would not really end until they learned of its safe arrival in the country town twenty miles away. And that they would know that same afternoon, for the mother of the bride had asked them to the wedding and Mrs. Lennox had been most urgent in insisting upon their going out with her, just, as she put it, for a "little country spree."

Mrs. Lennox had arranged a charming program whereby the girls should be of the party

she and Mr. Lennox were to take out on their coach, but as the morning wore on and Julie found each hour's work more difficult she finally told Hester she felt too tired to consider such an expedition and should remain at home. It was so unusual for Julie to admit fatigue that Hester felt alarmed and attempted to order her immediately to bed, saying she and Bridget could easily get through the rest and she should not go to the wedding without her. But Julie insisted, not only in working on into the afternoon when the orders for the day were at last completed, but in persuading Hester to consent to go to the wedding—a consent reluctantly given, for she was loath to go off without her sister. Having gained it, however, Julie dispatched a note to Mrs. Lennox begging to be excused from the party and turned her attention to helping Hester get ready when their work was done.

Whereas, owing to her delicate constitution, Julie's fatigue usually showed itself in complete physical exhaustion, Hester's frequently took the form of intense mental excitement, when the chords of her buoyant nature were strung to their highest pitch. At such times she talked incessantly, laughed immoderately and was so restless that Julie always threatened to tie a string to her. She was in such a mood this afternoon, laughing and capering about, performing such

ridiculous antics that Peter Snooks, who aided and abetted these moods, was barking with joy while Julie despaired of ever getting her clothed, not to mention restoring her to her right mind.

"You are a darling to help me but I don't love you at all for making me go when you are too ill to budge. I've a good notion not to mind you, anyway! Why should I? I'm bigger 'an you!" dancing about on her toes to increase her height, which possibly measured some two inches more than her sister's.

Julie caught her on the fly and thrust a dress skirt over her head, hooking it together without loss of time. "I'm going to have a nice quiet rest with Daddy," she said, "and will be all right when you come home. I want to hear all about the wedding and whether the cake got there and everything, so do go, there's a dear girl, and you'll have a beautiful drive and a good time into the bargain."

"And feel like a pig because you are not there. That will be pleasant, won't it! Is that the doorbell? Do peek out the window like a dear and see if the coach is there."

Julie did as she was requested and reported the arrival of the coach just as Bridget appeared and announced that Mrs. Lennox had sent Mr. Landor up to ask if she were ready.

"Do you suppose he is going?" whispered

Hester. "Oh! Julie dear, can't you go in and see him?"

"Not much! Here are your gloves and have you got a handkerchief? Can't find one? Never mind, here is one of mine. Now run along and kiss Daddy and hurry—it is dreadful to keep people waiting. You look as fresh as a lark but don't talk yourself black in the face," admonishingly. "Remember 'silence is golden,'" she called out when she had recovered her breath from Hester's parting hug.

She heard Mr. Landor expressing regret that the elder Miss Dale was not to be of the party and then she heard nothing more; but in most plebeian fashion she and Bridget and Peter Snooks peeped out of the window watching their departure, as did also Jack from the floor beneath. They saw Mr. Landor help her up to the box seat of the coach beside Mr. Lennox and sent down answering smiles to the parting wave of her hand.

"Belikes I bet the young gentleman's disappointed he ain't got her hisself," commented Bridget. "She's the prettiest of the whole lot!"

"Didn't she look lovely, Bridget! She always does when she is so excited."

"It's a lot more excited she'll be when she gets back an' finds you no better, Miss Julie, so

I'm just goin' to put you to bed. You do look in a way as I don't like, an' small wonder, the way you whip your poor frail little body along to do the work of ten!"

"Nonsense, Bridget! I am not frail, you must not talk that way. I am just tired out to-day and I couldn't brace up and be agreeable to people—I don't want to be agreeable—I want to be cross, so I advise you to keep out of the way."

Bridget acted upon this suggestion by picking her up in her great muscular arms and marching into her bedroom. There laying her down she left to brew her a cup of tea—faithful Bridget's panacea for every woe. Having returned and administered this she proceeded to undress her.

"I was going to lie down with Daddy," expostulated Julie feebly.

"You'll do nothin' of the sort," commanded Bridget. "You ain't fit to be seen with that look in your face. I'm goin' to tuck you into bed an' darken the room an' we'll see what sleep'll do for yez."

As if this petting were more than she could bear, Julie buried her head in the pillow with a movement that made the woman suspicious.

"What is it, darlint?" she cried, smoothing her hair. "Can't you tell your old Bridget about it?"

"Nothing," said a muffled voice.

"Shure it's rest yez want, darlint. I seen how yez kep' up all day so Miss Hester'd not be after knowin' how dead beat yez wuz an' now ye've clean gone all to pieces. Jus' cry it all out dearie, an' it's like a new person you'll be. 'Taint no small wonder yer wore out, with the worryin' an' frettin' that goes on inside yer an' always a cheery smile outside. Yer old Bridget knows! And may the blessed saints take yez out of this business before yez drop dead in yer tracks, sez I, every night on my knees—an' I don't care who's after knowin' it!" She gave the girl a loving motherly kiss and thus encouraged Julie cried her heart out on her shoulder.

This was an unusual proceeding, for Julie seldom cried in these days. She had learned when her emotions threatened to overcome her to stiffen her chin and swallow hard, hard, hard,—until the tears were forced back and only a drawn look about the mouth told of the battle royal. She valued each victory, however trifling, for tears are weakening and self-control is a mighty weapon in the equipment of a soldier. To-day she was weak bodily and the petting utterly unnerved her, so that she cried until she could cry no longer and finally fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

When she awoke it was with a confused sense that it must be the middle of the night and that

something was wrong, for Bridget stood over her.

"Are yez wakin'? That's right, dearie. You've bin sleepin' these two hours an' there's a gentleman to see yez."

"What?" dazedly, rubbing her eyes.

"A gentleman to see yez—he didn't give no name."

"Probably he has come to give an order. Couldn't you look after him, Bridget?"

"No, miss," with an air of suppressed excitement, "his business is particular with you. Go bathe your face, Miss Julie, an' I'll have you dressed in a jiffy."

"Well, I am a pretty looking object," commented the girl with a glance in the mirror as Bridget let some light into the room.

"Never you mind, you're feelin' much better an' you souse your eyes good with hot water—they'll look natural enough—an' it's gettin' kinder twilight in the parlor now anyhow," consolingly.

"What is the matter with you, Bridget, are you daft?" seeing her bring forth from the closet a French gown she had never worn in Radnor. "You know I never would put on such a thing to go in to see a customer. Get me a fresh shirt waist like the old dear you are."

"Oh! Miss Julie, just this once, please," in

such a coaxing tone that Julie found it hard to refuse her but she simply said:

"I couldn't, Bridget, not even to please you," and checked her inclination to smile at the vicious manner in which Bridget got out a shirt-waist and jabbed in the studs and cuff-buttons.

Immensely refreshed by her nap she went down the hall with a light heart and entered the little sitting-room to be greeted by a stranger who eagerly seized both her hands and cried:

"Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle, this is indeed a joy to find you!"

At the sound of his voice she trembled from head to foot and endeavored to withdraw her hands but he held them in a firm clasp and led her over to the window.

"I want the light to shine on your face, Mademoiselle, as it did in sunny California. Am I too bold—have I startled you?"

Still she did not speak and he dropped her hands as moving back a little he said penitently, "Forgive me, I am rough and have frightened you. May I sit down, Mademoiselle?"

She dropped into the nearest chair and waved him to another as she said: "I did not expect you here, Monsieur Grémond."

"Not expect me! Did you not know I was in Radnor?"

"Oh! yes," laughing a little for she was

beginning to recover herself, "but the two are not synonymous."

"You are jesting, Mademoiselle. Surely you know—you must know that only one thing would bring me to this country as soon as I came out of the wilderness." There was a world of meaning in his eyes, but Julie chose to ignore it.

"Your friendship with Mr. Renshawe has been of long standing, has it not?" she asked evasively.

"Oh! Mademoiselle Julie, it was not Renshawe—do not hold me aloof—have you forgotten the dear old California days?"

"One might have been led to suppose you had," she said quietly, "you disappeared so suddenly and—"

"But I wrote," he interrupted, "and though you never replied I meant always to return when I had accomplished something. Did you not feel that instinctively, Mademoiselle? Many things have happened to me since then and to you, also, your guardian said."

"My guardian?" she repeated. "Do you mean Dr. Ware?"

"He gave me permission to call and said you might have many things to say to me," looking at her rather perplexedly. "Will you tell me all about it, Mademoiselle?"

"Tell you," she cried springing up and con-

fronting him, "tell you as if it were a book I were reading all the sorrow and wretchedness and misery of these past eight months! No, a thousand times no! It would not interest you!" She threw back her head defiantly. "Why," she demanded fiercely, "did you find us out? We have no part in the world to which you belong! Could you not know that to see you would bring back the past, intensify the contrast between then and now—hurt us like the thrust of a sword? Oh! how could you come?"

"I came because I—" and then breaking off suddenly he said gravely, "If you think your affairs are of no interest to me you would perhaps prefer that I ask no questions, even though I do not understand."

"Oh! I did not mean to be rude," she exclaimed, her burst of resentment over, "how could you understand and how can I explain? Dear Daddy is enduring a living death—everything is changed—we are professional caterers—working women—you will not begin to comprehend that and no doubt it shocks you. The dignity of labor is not a popular theme on the other side!"

"Mademoiselle, have you only unkind things to say to me—me, who would have given my life to have averted them or helped you through all this? You do not seem to comprehend that I

love you—love you—have journeyed out to Los Angeles and back to find you and now,"—he drew in his breath, "ah! now I never mean to let you go." He took a step toward her but she eluded him, standing well back in the room where he could not see how her lips trembled as she said:

"You must not talk to me like this; I—I cannot bear it. I am all unstrung to-day and you startle me with your calm air of taking things for granted."

"Do I, chérie?" tenderly. "But you see I love you and you are going to love me, too."

"No," she replied, drawing still further back, "no, Monsieur Grémond, I am not."

Something unflinching about the girl's quiet tone made the man say beseechingly, "Ah! Mademoiselle Julie, do not kill me!"

"Kill you? You never thought whether you would kill me or not, did you, when you almost taught me to love you in those old days and then rode away? Many a man does that, expecting a girl to take everything for granted and receive him with open arms when he returns. And many a girl waits and waits, eating her heart out meanwhile. But I am not that kind, Monsieur!"

"Oh, Mademoiselle!"

"I was very fond of you—so fond that when I knew you were in town I wondered whether I

cared to see you—wondered whether I would have loved you had you loved me and last night I thought perhaps I should see you at the Wares'; but we did not go, and now you come to me and at the first sight of you I know it is not love—could never have been love under any circumstances!"

"Are you sure you know what love is, Mademoiselle?" and seeing the color spread in a crimson wave over her face he cried, "Some one has stolen you away from me! Tell me, is it not true?"

"What right have you to ask questions?" she demanded, angered by his assumption of authority. And then more quietly, "We must not quarrel, Monsieur, we have been altogether too good friends for that. I want to tell you that we are interested in your explorations and how proud we are to know that so many of your plans have been accomplished."

"It is nothing to me now."

"Fie, Monsieur! Are you going to cry baby because you can't have the world all your way?"

"You are all my world."

Julie had heard this from other men under similar conditions, and though she believed his disappointment to be genuinely bitter she knew that life could still hold out some hope even in the face of unrequited love. But how make him see it her way? In a moment she said:

"I am only a girl, Monsieur Grémond, but I think you want me to respect you, don't you, and I certainly shall not be apt to if you are going to be vanquished right before my very eyes."

"What a strange girl you are, Mademoiselle," he said, roused to a critical survey of her. "Most girls like their lovers to be inconsolable, but you threaten me with everlasting disgrace for refusing to be consoled. I don't understand it."

"No, you would not understand me, ever," said Julie cheerfully, glad to have roused him at last. "You must go back to France and marry some nice sweet little thing who will perfectly adore you and you'll be 'happy ever after,' as the story books say."

"I wish you would not dispose of me in such an off-hand fashion," aggrievedly. "I am tempted to kidnap you and carry you off this moment to the steamer. She sails in the morning. Oh! couldn't you do it, *ma petite?*"

The vehemence of his tone really startled Julie who laughed to herself afterward as she remembered how she had shrank back in her corner as if she expected him to snatch her up bodily.

"Leave Hester," she cried aghast, "and Daddy and Bridget—and Peter Snooks and—and every-body to go away with you? Monsieur Grémond, you must be mad."

"Then you do not know what love is." He rose and came over to her. "Will you put your hands in mine, Mademoiselle? I am going—good-by. I suppose I have been a selfish brute to dwell altogether on my own troubles and not sympathize with yours, but the truth is I am knocked out. I undoubtedly, as you say, took too much for granted."

"Do not put us out of your life altogether," said Julie gently. "Some day perhaps you will really care for my interest and respect and all the things I would gladly give you if you would have them."

"If you put it that way, perhaps—but it seems to me there is only one thing," he said disconsolately.

"Then you are not half the man I take you to be!"

"I will be," asserted Grémond, his better nature responding to this rebuke. "It is good at least to have been with you. Good-by, Mademoiselle, good-by."

For some time after he had gone Julie sat with closed lids trying to forget the last look of his eyes into hers, so persistently did it haunt her; but within her heart surged a feeling of gratitude that there is an all-wise Providence who shapes our ends.

CHAPTER XVII

MADAME GRUNDY was saying that winter that at last Kenneth Landor had settled down, though why he should take the trouble to burden himself with business cares when he had a rich, indulgent father was, from her point of view, wholly incomprehensible. Other people who knew Kenneth better saw that his life had become full of purpose and regarded it as the natural outcome of a nature like his—rich in possibilities. To the father who was just learning to know the son, there was much that was surprising in the intelligent way in which he grasped the great commission business and little by little made himself familiar with every detail, showing that in his composition was much practical ability—talents unquestionably inherited. Of any ulterior motive which had led him on to these things Mr. Landor had no suspicion nor indeed had any one save Dr. Ware, who kept his own counsel, and possibly Jack, whose fanciful imagination wove endless romances, the thread of which became wretchedly entangled, for what could a poor boy do with two heroines to one hero?

That was the stumbling block of our young author, for he never could make up his mind to choose between the Dale girls. First he would write out a beautiful story in which his hero (and there was only one here to him married Julie and was as happy as the day is long. This would have been eminently satisfactory if it had not been for a sort of feeling of slighting Hester, who seemed to be lurking in the background of his tale gazing at him with reproachful eyes. Jack the tender-hearted could not stand that, so zip! would go all the paper torn to shreds, and he would patiently start all over again to give Hester a chance. But however he arranged it, one was left out. He couldn't have it on his conscience to make his hero a Mormon and so to one and one alone could he belong. This was all wrong, from Jack's point of view, but he did not know how to make it any different and as it seemed to be a subject he could not discuss with any of the three persons most concerned the poor boy gave it up in despair.

But if Jack was racked with indecision it was not so with Kenneth Landor, who had fallen in love with Hester at first sight. One hears that to fall in love at first sight is an experience belonging to bygone days, and is quite unknown to the practical common-sense young people of whom in this generation [illegible] much. Be

that as it may, Kenneth, in spite of his worldly experience, was old-fashioned enough to be full of sentiment and treasured in his mind every meeting with Hester down to their first walk when she had dismissed him so summarily under the lamp-post. He could count them on the fingers of one hand, the actual hours he had spent with her, but between Dr. Ware and Jack he managed to keep as well informed concerning her life as if he were in daily intercourse with her; and it was his sole aim and ambition to put her struggles to an end. The generous fellow had not Grémond's idea of taking one of them away—he could not conceive of the little family being separated and his admiration of Julie was rapidly growing into an affection that made him long to cast her life, too, in sunny places and make a snug little home for them all. These were Kenneth's hopes and dreams—air-castles which sometimes took grim, fantastic shapes and often tottered to the ground when he remembered that Hester might not deign to look at him.

Suddenly into all this work and dreaming entered a new element, threatening to disturb the future with a terrible upheaval, for the necessity that our country should go to war with Spain was talked of openly throughout the land. Rumor [illegible]ar would be, had been, never would [illegible] were rife, suggested and con-

tradicted in a breath, while the uncertainty of national affairs produced an excitement that pervaded all classes and conditions of men.

Kenneth was one of those who believed in the war and whose whole spirit was fired with a desire to do his part toward jealously guarding his country's honor. At the same time, if he hoped to win Hester and make a home for her it scarcely seemed as if it would accrue to his advantage to go away. These things were so in his mind that he longed for a chance to see and talk with her, and then, as always, in his thoughts of her he was confronted by the fearful consciousness that she might take no interest in so unimportant a thing as himself. Nevertheless, he meant to make himself important to her and it was therefore to him as to Grémond, a great disappointment that the girls had not put in an appearance at Miss Ware's reception and he had spent an anxious night speculating as to the cause of their non-appearance.

He managed by rising earlier than usual to get around to Dr. Ware's office on his way to business the morning after the reception; but, contrary to habit, that individual was already off. Much perturbed he worked harder than ever at the office and regretted that he had promised to drive out of town to a wedding. He was in no mood for society, even so charming as that of

the Lennoxes. He was not a man who broke his engagements, however, and therefore went home about three o'clock to dress. When the Lennoxes called for him he sauntered out in his usual charming manner and made the greater effort to be agreeable to each member of the party from the mere fact that it *was* an effort. This is a form of unselfishness, trivial perhaps, but necessitating a willingness to put aside one's personal inclination, to thrust aside one's mood for the general good. Some people call it adaptability, some tact, some a desire to please, but in Kenneth Landor, as in many others, it was an unselfish wish to contribute his share to the general entertainment. He was a man who recognized the duty of a guest to his hostess and did not look upon it as being all the other way. Having adjusted himself to a purely impersonal philosophical attitude toward the expedition, imagine his revulsion of feeling when Mrs. Lennox told him that the party would not be complete until they had picked up Miss Hester Dale whose sister, unfortunately, was unable to go with them. As we know, she delegated him to escort Hester down and we may know too, though no one on the coach suspected it, that he went up the four flights of stairs two steps at a time and nearly ran down Jack who was hobbling up on his crutches.

What if, when he and Hester went into the street together she was immediately appropriated by their host and given the seat of honor beside him. Couldn't Kenneth *see* her—every turn of her pretty head—and wasn't he inwardly proud that she was chosen for this distinction and didn't he know that it would be his own fault if he did not monopolize her later on?

As for Hester, she had never been in a merrier mood and chattered on like a little magpie, forgetful of her sister's warning "not to talk herself black in the face." Every now and then she would heave a little sigh and audibly wish Julie were there—a wish promptly seconded by her host, who nevertheless was amply satisfied with his companion.

The mere sensation of bowling along over smooth roads and through the beautiful environs of Radnor was in itself a novelty and delight to Hester but she was raised to the seventh heaven of bliss when Mr. Lennox, after a talk they had had about horses, said:

"Wouldn't you like to take the ribbons, Miss Dale?"

"Oh!" she gasped, "but my gloves—I can't drive in these," holding up two white kid hands. She did not think it necessary to add that they were her only pair.

"Take them off and I'll give you mine. You can manage even if they are big. Try."

She tried and in another moment the gloves were on, the ribbons slipped into her fingers and the control of four superb horses lay within her hands. Ah! how delicious it was to feel their strength and hers!

"What would Mrs. Lennox say if she knew I were driving?"

"She would not mind, but the others might. We'll never tell."

"Never."

They swung along at an even pace, but presently, as if conscious that the ribbons had changed hands, the horses became restive and finally taking fright at an imaginary object, the leaders shied and plunged forward madly.

"Give them their heads!" commanded Mr. Lennox peremptorily.

"Don't drive at quite such a mad pace, please Mr. Lennox," cried a girl from the rear, "you frighten us nearly to death."

"Oh! it's all right," reassuringly, "they'll quiet down in a moment.

Hester with set lips and feet firmly planted was struggling to get them under control. She did not speak nor did Mr. Lennox again, but he watched her narrowly, alert and ready in a sec-

ond to relieve her. He thought her equal to the emergency and she was, for after half a mile of tearing madly over the ground, she succeeded in regaining control of them and the horses, recognizing the strength of an experienced hand, quieted down into the old habit of obedience.

"Good!" cried Mr. Lennox, "you're a crack whip, as I thought."

A little color came back into Hester's white face. "I'm so grateful to you for not taking them away from me," she said. "I should have died of humiliation if you had."

"I thought I could trust you to pull through, but now that you have proved your prowess—and I believe you just got the animals to playing tricks to show what you *could* do, you sly young person—aren't you a bit tired? Shan't I drive?"

"Oh! thank you, yes, but I—I enjoyed it."

She was very quiet after that, and presently when they reached the house and Landor sprang off and turned to lift her down, the two bright red spots in her cheeks did not escape him nor the subdued manner so unusual to her.

As they passed into the house Hester saw in the hall a large table piled high with small white boxes and she shuddered as she thought how they had spent half the night over the completion of those innocent looking things. The

satin bows actually had a "perky" look as if the ribbon had just tied itself without any trouble whatever! Turning her back on them abruptly she followed Mrs. Lennox into the drawing-room, where the ceremony took place a few moments after their arrival.

It was a simple wedding with no bridesmaids nor ushers nor adjuncts of any kind, and the bridegroom had so large a family connection that only intimate friends had been added to the list so that the reception took on the informal character of a large family gathering. When the bride had been kissed all around, including every male cousin, in spite of the laughing protests of the bridegroom, she led the way into the dining-room for supper.

"May I take you out, Miss Dale?" asked a dapper young fellow who had just been presented to Hester.

"Thank you, I—"

"You can't walk off with Miss Dale in that calm fashion, Charley," said a voice back of them, "she's promised to come to supper with me."

Hester had no recollection of any such compact so she looked up and said mischievously, "What a wonderful memory you have, Mr. Landor," turning the while as if to move off with the younger man.

"You come with me, won't you?" urged Charley Bemis, "Landor always claims the earth and never gives us younger fellows a chance. We'll have to hurry a bit, Miss Dale," looking at her entreatingly, "if we want to see the bride cut the cake."

"The cake!" she repeated, suddenly shrinking back. "Oh! Mr. Bemis, you go on without me, will you? I—"

"Run along, Charley," said Landor. "Miss Dale and I will follow. The dining-room will never begin to hold us all anyway, so if we do not get in you look us up and tell us who got the ring. You may get it yourself if you hurry—who knows!"

"Oh!" said Hester when the man had departed, "I couldn't go in there—I just couldn't."

"Of course not," emphatically, "it is much too crowded. They've covered in the piazza by the dining-room. Won't you let me bring you something to eat out there?"

"How could you fib to that boy so!" exclaimed the girl at the same time signifying her willingness to be led to some less crowded spot.

Kenneth laughed. "You drove me to it. Do you suppose I intended to let him walk off with you under my very eyes?"

"Why not? I'm sure he seemed a very *nice* boy," with marked emphasis.

"Oh! yes, he's nice enough," cheerfully, "quite nice, now you mention it, but I'm not just yearning for his society at the present moment."

"Perhaps I am," getting a wistful far-away expression in her eyes that was tantalizing.

"Here we are," said the man abruptly as they reached a semi-circular piazza where tables and chairs had been placed. "If you will sit down, Miss Dale, I'll look up Mr. Bemis immediately."

"Thank you," demurely, "but if it *should* happen that you found the supper first, would you mind bringing that instead? I am *so* hungry," with a pathetic droop at the corners of her mouth.

He went off on air, returning followed by a waiter almost before she had a chance to miss him.

And what a gay little supper that was! They had a small table quite to themselves, where Landor played host and was solicitous in providing for all her wants. Mr. Lennox, wandering about with an eye to his party, smiled across the piazza at her and reported to his wife that Hester was being well taken care of. Half unconsciously the girl herself was aware that her slightest wish was anticipated and she caught herself wondering as she played with her ice, whether it was chance or design that led Mr. Landor to avoid having any cake served at their

go to the mountain, so I've brought the mountain to you. The bride cut the cake long ago but I saved my piece to eat with you. Landor doesn't get a crumb."

Landor looked as if he would like to stuff the whole slice down the man's throat. The girl smiled and resigned herself to at least make a pretense of eating the thing she had tried so desperately to avoid.

"There is something in your half," suggested young Bemis significantly.

"Is there?" replied Hester, wishing his enthusiasm were less. "You find it for me."

He cut her piece and pulled out something wrapped in paraffine paper which proved to be a shining gold dollar.

"Oh! you've got it!" he cried. "Miss Dale's got the money," turning to announce it to the whole piazza, "she's going to be rich!"

"How nice of you to prophesy such good fortune," she replied picking up the coin and rising. "Won't you come and help me find Mrs. Lennox and tell her about it? I am sure Mr. Landor will excuse us?"

Kenneth, who had risen, bowed low and wondered how so adorably pretty a girl could be so stony-hearted. He was utterly confounded when, as she brushed by him she slipped something in his hand with a whispered "That's for

luck," and vanished with Bemis in attendance. A quick indrawing of his fingers into the palm of his hand told Landor a little coin lay within his grasp. A half-smothered ejaculation escaped him! Her luck she had passed on to him! Did he dare attribute to it any significance? No outward sign betrayed his inward perturbation as he sauntered into the house to join the other guests.

Whether it was Kenneth's skillful management or a preconceived arrangement on Mrs. Lennox's part or just Fate, deponent saith not, but the fact remains that when the coach started off again that evening, Hester found herself ensconced on the back seat with Landor, the rest of the party chatting gayly in front of them, the guards well in the rear.

"Miss Dale," Landor said when they had ridden some moments in silence, "are you too tired to-night to let me talk to you a little, seriously?" He had no desire to lose any time.

"Then you think I can be serious?"

"I know you can, only you never choose to be with me."

"I *am* an awful tease," she admitted, touched by his wistful tone, "but I can be the most serious person in the world and I should like to have you to talk to me, only—you are not going to scold me any more, are you, Mr. Landor? I

think I am really too tired for that." Her low musical voice seemed to drift to him plaintively through the darkness.

"I was going to be selfishly egotistical and talk about—about a friend of mine," hoping she had not detected how near he had come to blundering. "I wanted to ask your advice about him if you are quite sure you are not too tired to listen, Miss Dale."

"Of course I am not. I should like to hear about your friend, Mr. Landor."

Was there ever a voice so sweet, he thought, or a girl so full of contradictions? One moment bewitchingly, aggravatingly whimsical, the next revealing unfathomable depths of a nature which to him seemed the purest and noblest in the world. Aloud he said:

"My friend is torn by a divided duty. He wants to go to the war but—"

"You think there will be war? Can't he go?" she interrupted. "It seems to me every man must go who can."

"Yes, he can, but there are people whom he loves whom he hates to leave—more than that whom he wants to stay and protect. It is as if his whole future were at stake—not only his but theirs, and he can't seem to see his way clear."

"Are they old and dependent on him for support, these people?"

"No, but he wants them to become dependent on him and how can that be if he goes away?"

"If they love him," the girl said emphatically, "they will not stand in his way."

"But he does not know that they love him or that they will ever love him. He only knows that he loves them and—oh! Miss Dale," sweeping aside this strangely complicated case, "if you had a brother in times like these, what would you do?"

"Do?" she cried; "why, I'd help him off to the front without a moment's hesitation! Julie and I would be the proudest girls in the world if we had a brother to go to the war! If Daddy were well he would go—there never was a finer officer than Daddy. Oh! Mr. Landor, you know us so little that you've no idea how strongly we feel about these things. We've tried in our own small way, Julie and I, to be soldiers ourselves and we think no sacrifice too great to make for one another and for our country." In her earnestness she had forgotten the man beside her, the friend and everything save the inspiration of those principles which were as the very air she breathed.

He made no reply, fearing to break the spell and startle her back into her old elusiveness. This revelation of her inner self was very precious to him.

Presently she said: "Perhaps I know a little how your friend feels, because I have always thought if ever I lived in war times I should go as a nurse, but now I could not consider such a thing."

"You? You are too young," he gasped, never dreaming of this possibility.

"No, I am not too young, but Julie could not carry on our business and take care of Daddy, too, all alone, and my duty is here."

"You are doing active service in a field much harder than anything they may see in Cuba," he said intently.

"Oh! no, don't say that; I do not deserve it; but you have talked to me so frankly about your friend that I wanted you to know I understand a little, though I do not believe I have been of any help. But this much I know, if I were one of those people whom he loves, however much I might need him and perhaps want him,"—was her voice faltering?—"I should urge him to go and love him the better for going and believe that his future and all connected with him would be the richer and the brighter for the personal sacrifice."

There was an exultant ring in her low voice that set the man's heart to throbbing with a pain strangely new and exquisite and so great was his emotion that for some time he did not trust

himself to speak. When he did he said very gently:

"You *have* helped my friend, Miss Dale, more than you have any idea and I thank you for him. Some day, perhaps, you will let him thank you himself. I—I shall always remember your kindness to-night (poor fellow, it was not easy to pick his words calmly when he longed to pour his heart out to her). "I may not see you again for awhile; I—I am going away."

The coach drew up at her door and she was brought to a sudden realization of her surroundings by the laughing salutations of the party as they said goodnight. Kenneth had sprung to the ground and was waiting to assist her to alight. She was not conscious of the gentle, almost tender manner in which he lifted her down, but as he stood with bared head holding the door open, for her, she stopped a moment and put out her hands impulsively.

"Is this good-by?" she said, her beautiful eyes looking full into his.

"Yes," with her hands close in his, "I shall go out with the first regiment from Radnor."

CHAPTER XVIII

JULIE was in bed, but not asleep, when Hester came in that night, and propped herself up on her elbow to listen with absorbed interest while she gave an account of herself.

"Julie dear," the younger girl began, "never urge me again to go anywhere where I am to be confronted by the fruit of our labor. I can't stand it. I thought I should die when I first saw the boxes of cake piled up in the hall—of course in a way it was a relief to know they were safely there, but it gave me an actual pain to remember how we nearly killed ourselves over them. Then a man I met nearly dragged me out to see the bride cut the cake. That was too much and Mr. Landor came to the rescue."

"How nice of him!"

"Yes," admitted Hester, "he *was* nice and we were having a jolly time when that awful man pounced down upon us, bride cake in hand, and I was actually forced to eat some of it!"

"Poor child! Couldn't you have intimated that you had tasted it just a few times before?"

"I was tempted to, but out of consideration for Mrs. Lennox I spared him the shock. And

JULIE WAS IN BED WHEN HESTER CAME IN THAT NIGHT

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then what do you suppose? I got the gold dollar! I would not have bothered to put such a polish on it yesterday if I had known it was coming back to me!"

"Did you throw it out of the window in your best high-tragedy style?"

"No, I gave it to Mr. Landor. He looked so cross when Mr. Bemis joined us that he was absolutely funny, so I thought I'd just give him a little present—'for a good boy on his birthday' or something of that sort, you know, only he wasn't so alarmingly good and it wasn't his birthday,—at least I don't suppose it was, do you?"

"Hester, you do talk the most idiotic nonsense!"

"Do I? Well, I've been pretty serious the past hour," she said soberly as she slipped off her gown and seated herself on the edge of the bed preparatory to taking down her hair. "Julie, we are going to have war!"

To Julie, who could not be expected to know her sister's train of thought, this announcement seemed so irrelevant that she looked at her wonderingly.

"It was not in to-night's paper," she said.

"No, but it is in the air. Mr. Landor thinks it is inevitable. He talked with me to-night about a friend of his who's crazy to go. I did

not suspect a thing at first but afterward I did—it's himself, Julie—he means to volunteer with the first call for troops."

"That is just what I should expect of him, Hester."

"Y-e-s," reluctantly, "but do you know from things he said it is evidently going to be a tussle for him to make up his mind to leave. He is all upset about it and oh! Julie dear, how I did wish you were there to talk to him—you always say such beautiful, helpful things. It is some one he cares about—perhaps it is his father. Do you suppose it *could* be any one else, Julie?"

"I don't know, dear"—certain suspicions in regard to Landor gaining ground every minute—"perhaps it is Jessie Davis," wickedly, for Julie could do her share of teasing too.

"That fashion plate!" scornfully. "I don't believe a word of it! She's not fit to button his shoes!"

"Probably she would not care to," remarked Julie, intensely amused at this taking up of the cudgels in Landor's behalf; and then, thinking it best—this wise Julie!—not to prolong the jest, she said, "It is probably his father. He is old, you know, and Mr. Landor may hesitate to go off and leave him. I am glad he talked with you, dear, about anything he had so much at heart, for it shows how much he appreciates and

values your opinion and you probably talked to him twice as well as I could, you funny little baby owl!"

Hester's reply to this was to fling herself down on the foot of the bed and cry in a muffled tone, "I'm so tired—so dead tired! I didn't realize it until I kept so still coming home and then I ached so I wanted to scream while Mr. Landor was talking to me!"

Julie's arms were around her in a moment. "The strain has been too much, dear. You cannot stand the work and play too,—it is no use trying."

"But I like to play," cried Hester rebelliously, "and sometimes I feel so wicked—as if I couldn't keep up my end another minute, and then I want to run away—all of us run away—to have 'The Hustle' again and go racing out of all this, and then," —her voice broke,—"Oh! then Julie darling, I am so ashamed of such thoughts—so humiliated to think I can't be as patient as you are!"

"I know, dear," stroking her sister's hair softly, "and I am not patient—not half as patient as I try to be—only I hold myself with a fearfully tight rein for fear I'll go all to pieces. We are both pretty much knocked out now, dear, with the strain of the winter, the newness of things and—"

"Not to mention being half fed," inserted Hester.

"But we have paid all our expenses as we've gone along and kept out of debt even if we have half starved to do it. You see, dear, up to now," said Julie, the accountant, "we have had to put such a large amount of our earnings back into the business for all sorts of things."

"Imagine what cousin Nancy would say if she knew how we wriggled along on almost nothing, you and I!"

"She'd say we were fools not to have accounts with the butcher, the baker and candlestick-maker but we do not agree with her, and Daddy, bless his heart! does not want for anything. Thank heaven, we've accomplished that much! Isn't it a mercy, dear, that he does not realize things? It would break his heart!"

"Oh! yes, but how I do long to have our darling old Daddy back!"

Julie said nothing. Her chin was very rigid but in a few moments she said cheerfully, "I think the spring promises a good deal. Our work increases every day and we can soon begin to live better. Bridget says marketing is much cheaper in the summer, and if we only make enough now to carry Daddy comfortably through the dull season when people are away and we are not earning much, we'll get on fa-

mously. Just think what magnificent times we'll have this summer just loafing around Daddy's room!"

Hester, who seldom allowed herself such luxury of woe as she had just been indulging in, sat up, wiped her eyes on the corner of the sheet and said emphatically, "I'm a fiend and I ought to be cow-hided!"

"I'll paddle you instead," said Julie, picking up the hair-brush Hester had dropped and making as if to apply the back of it vigorously.

Hester dodged but Julie caught her and, springing out of bed, planted her firmly in a chair and said, "I'll brush that crazy head of yours and help you to bed or you'll never get there! It must be all hours of the night."

"You'll catch your death of cold," remonstrated Hester.

"I won't, and if you'll keep as still as a mouse and not scream when I comb your hair—"

"You pull like the dickens; you know you do!"

"I do not and I wish you'd stop talking and give me a chance. I declare you get worse every day—I tremble to think what you're coming to!—and I've, oh! such a piece of news to tell you!"

She was wholly unprepared for the clutch of Hester's arms about her neck as she cried,

"Don't tell me to-night, Julie dear, I—I know—all—about—it!"

"Do you?" holding her fast. "Then aren't you glad it has all come out this way?"

"Yes, Julie darling," stifling a sob.

"Why, Hester, what is it? You must not cry, dear. I can't think what is the matter!"

"I'm a selfish brute, but oh, I'm not really, Julie—not really. I think it is the most beautiful thing!"

"What is 'the most beautiful thing'?" wondering if the child were losing her mind.

"That he's been here. I knew it the moment you spoke. As if he'd fail to come!"

"Hester! do you mean you think that I—I—"

Hester nodded.

"But I don't dear, not the least little bit in the world!"

"Oh, Julie!"

For a moment they clung together. Then Julie gave a hysterical laugh.

"What a silly old goose you were to go having absurd thoughts about me, and how dared you, how *dared* you think I was in love with any one?"

"I did not know," penitently, "you kept so still about Monsieur Grémond and he *was* in love with you, wasn't he?"

"Yes dear. He came this afternoon and I

sent him away. We do not want to have secrets from each other, do we, old girl, but I never talked to you much about him because there was a time when I did not quite know whether I cared for him or not. Perhaps back in the old days, if he had asked me, I might have said yes, but I doubt it—it was more a sort of fascination he exercised over me for awhile and now I am truly thankful he has come and gone. He has removed every particle of doubt as to my attitude toward him."

"Oh, I am so glad. I couldn't bear the thought of his carrying you off to France."

Julie's eyes opened wide. "Did you suppose I'd go away and leave you and Daddy and the rest?" in a tone of astonishment.

"Some Prince Charming is coming along to carry you off some day, Julie dear," said Hester, who could bring herself to regard such an event with some degree of complacency now that it was not an immediate fact. "I'm not quite such a selfish pig" (she never spared herself in the matter of epithets), "as to expect to have you always."

"I think we are sufficient unto each other now, dear," said Julie seriously, "and we may always be, for all the years to come; but if some day our lives should change—a new interest enter in—we'll share it and make it beautify the

lives of both of us just as we've always shared every joy and sorrow ever since we were babies." She kissed her sister solemnly.

"You blessed Julie!" was the response.

When the gas was out and Hester, the irrepressible, finally in bed, the light of the full moon came streaming into the little room. And lingering with a caressing touch it fell upon a white pillow on which a curly golden head and a sleek dark one lay pressed close together. In the solemn stillness the breathing of two slender forms told that the excitement of the past forty-eight hours had at last ended in much needed sleep.

CHAPTER XIX

MRS. DRISCOE was not a reasonable woman, never had been reasonable, had no desire to be reasonable; it was therefore not to be expected that she would take a reasonable attitude toward Sidney Renshawe when he went down to Virginia early that spring and asked her for her Nannie. In vain did he argue and cajole, in vain did the dear Colonel remonstrate, in vain did little Nannie cry and plead; to one and all she turned a deaf ear. It was no—no—no then and forever.

The County discussed the situation freely and wondered that so worldly a mother should frown upon so eligible a *parti*. Sidney Renshawe was well born, fairly rich, rising steadily in his profession; all the County knew that much, though it is doubtful if any one of them had ever been in Radnor. What if Renshawe's hair was red and his mustache a trifle bristly? Didn't that add a touch of strength to his face and suggest a resemblance to a certain Prisoner of Zenda, who, though only a man in a book, as every one said, was, nevertheless, the most idolized of heroes.

As for poor little Nannie, it was plainly to be seen she was losing flesh over the situation.

As she wrote the girls, she was "torn by conflicting emotions," using the well-worn phrase because the poor little thing had no words of her own in which to express her feelings. She had never had complex feelings before. Hitherto her life had consisted in loving and being loved, which led her naturally enough into a similar state of things with Sidney Renshawe, who came, saw and conquered her girlish heart. The Colonel was her stanch friend and ally. He liked Renshawe and felt he was just the man to whom he could trust his little girl when the time came to give her up. And that was not necessarily imminent, for if Mrs. Driscoe was unreasonable Renshawe certainly was not and was willing to wait one, two, three years if need be. But Mrs. Driscoe remained obdurate and the household was plunged into a state of strained atmospheric conditions such as had never been known before.

"I can't help loving him and it isn't wrong to love him, is it?" little Nannie would say appealingly to the Colonel.

"No, no, Puss, be patient. We'll win her over soon." It is doubtful if the Colonel believed this cheerful prophecy, but the child had to be comforted.

Renshawe had remained two weeks with his friends at the plantation adjacent to the Driscoes, seeing Nannie every day. Mrs. Driscoe did not refuse him this boon but, declined to receive him herself and intimated so plainly that the man's room was preferable to his company that the girl took little pleasure in his visits and agreed with him that it was far better he should go away. Without her mother's permission she refused to become engaged but the night previous to his departure she allowed him to slip on her finger a certain simple little ring which he reminded her he had been carrying in his pocket since the night they met. The next day he went north leaving his heart in Virginia, with a delicious sense of its security in Nannie's keeping. The consciousness was strong within him that the winning of such as she was worth the waiting.

And Mrs. Driscoe all this while went about with the aggrieved air of one whose troubles were scarcely to be understood by an unsympathetic world. If she had been put to it she could have given no reason for her opposition to Renshawe, for she had none and had shown him marked favor at the beginning. But that was before, as she told the Colonel, "her suspicions were aroused." From the moment they were, Renshawe was made unpleasantly conscious of it.

While Nannie, sustained by the Colonel and

the County's backing, got what solace she could out of the days that were so long and oh! so lonely after Sidney left her, he, back in Radnor, turned for comfort to the Dale girls, who took him into their hearts for Nannie's sake and soon learned to like him for his own. He became a frequent visitor, calling usually Sunday afternoons when he felt he would be less likely to disturb them, and he wrote Nannie that except a certain little girl in Virginia whose name he would never divulge, they were the sweetest girls he had ever known and the bravest. But he did not tell Nannie how as he came to observe them more closely he discovered in their faces little careworn lines which told a tale their lips never would have disclosed and how about Julie, especially, there was a subdued, almost intense manner, as if she were holding herself in a vise. They never spoke of their work or their cares to him or any one else and made light of any passing reference to their business. Indeed, as far as Sidney might have known from them, they lived quite like other girls.

In regard to his friend Grémond's previous connection with them or of his call on Julie, Renshawe knew nothing. The Frenchman left town the day following that on which he had seen Julie and had not referred to the Dales in any way either to him or Dr. Ware, who was left to

draw his own conclusions. This was not so simple as might be supposed, for while in one light the man's sudden disappearance looked as if Julie might have given him his congé, viewed from another point, especially taken in connection with a certain happy light in Julie's eyes these days when he caught her glance, it led him to believe that perhaps the girl had given him her promise but required that he should wait yet a longer time to claim her. The Doctor longed to know and wearied himself with imagining why she did not confide in him. But since she did not, delicacy forbade his mentioning Grémond's name.

Another person who did some speculating over Grémond was Mrs. Lennox, but being a woman she arrived at her conclusions quickly and decided that his precipitous flight to France when he had been booked for some weeks in Radnor, argued ill for the result of his trip across the country. She was not at home the one time he had called on her and the fact that he was not at more pains to seek her out and continue the confidential relations established in her sanctum on his previous visit, satisfied her that he could not have found what he was so eagerly seeking. Being a sympathetic woman she was sorry, but she would have thought more of him had he chosen to tell her the outcome of his affairs. As

he did not, she dismissed him from her mind altogether, having agreed with Miss Marston one day when they were discussing him, that he was a clever man but after all a trifle too self-centered. To tell the truth Mrs. Lennox had been mistaken in her analysis of his character and it annoyed her.

A fortnight after the wedding the Dale girls were devouring with eager eyes one morning a very small note and a very large check which they could scarcely read, so great was their excitement.

"Oh, what a relief!" cried Julie, "to know that everything pleased Mrs. Truxton, and how good she was to write such a kind appreciative note to people like us whom she scarcely knows! Let's go and read it to Bridget."

Bridget, when she heard it, was reduced to tears and presently they were all laughing and crying together, for the work of this first big order had been more of an anxiety than any one of them cared to acknowledge, while its success expressed so kindly by their thoughtful customer meant as much in its way as the accompanying check, which fairly dazzled them.

"One hundred and twenty-five dollars!" cried Hester ecstatically. "We're millionaires! Oh—oh—oh! to think of our *earning* so much money!" She waved the check wildly over her

head and even insisted that Peter Snooks should have a sniff at it before she said, "Wouldn't you just like to frame it and keep it forever?"

"I know what I should like best of all to do with it," said Julie.

"I bet Miss Hester can guess by the knowin' look in her eyes," said Bridget. "It's meself that knows too, what your blessed selves is thinkin'.'

"Of course you both know," Julie said quietly, "we want to begin to pay Dr. Ware rent."

They went the next afternoon to his office. On the doorsteps they encountered Miss Ware, who turned about as she saw them approach.

"Don't let us detain you," said Julie politely, "we have just come for a little business talk with your brother."

"Ah!" she replied, "I fancied you got about all of that sort of thing you wanted at home. You'd better come upstairs and let me make you some tea—you look peaked, both of you. Philip ought to give you a tonic. Tell him I said so, and come up afterward. I insist upon it and shall have the tea ready. It will not do you any harm to sit down in a different atmosphere for a while. I suppose you do get sick to death of a kitchen."

There was no doubt that Miss Ware possessed

to perfection the faculty of rubbing one the wrong way, but Julie deemed it wise not to decline these overtures and made no further protest against her going in with them.

"Horrid old thing! How I hate her!" whispered Hester, as Miss Ware went on upstairs and they waited a moment in the Doctor's ante-room.

"So do I, but she's *his* sister and she means well."

"You'd find excuses for the old boy himself."

"No, I wouldn't," laughed Julie, "but—here's Dr. Ware."

He bowed to them as he entered from the private office and passed by with an elderly man, with whom he was in deep conversation. In a moment he returned and greeted the girls warmly.

"Well," he said, giving each a hand, "this is delightful. Come into the other room. That was old Mr. Landor—Kenneth's father, by the way—did you notice him? He is about half Kenneth's size, but he has force enough for a dozen men. I wish you girls knew him."

He pulled out chairs as he talked and ensconced the girls comfortably, then stood against the table facing them with arms folded and the smile on his face which Bridget vowed was "like the blessed sun for warmin' the cockles of your heart."

"It is good to have you here," he said heartily, "I wish you came more often. Perhaps," with a laugh that showed the gleam of his white teeth, "I do not give you a chance—I go so often to see you."

"If you came every hour of the day it wouldn't be too often," exclaimed Hester, who never loved people by halves. "But Julie is going to do the talking to-day. I intend to keep still."

"As if you could! Well, Julie?" smiling at her.

"We have come to have a little business talk with you," she said, twisting her fingers together nervously and finding it a little difficult to begin.

"Delighted to be so honored," he replied lightly, bowing low.

"It is about the—the rent," said Julie, who wished her words would not stick in her throat. "We are getting on so well with our work that we want to begin to pay you. We thought if you would let us begin this month and—"

"And not object or scold us or anything," broke in Hester who never could remain out of a conversation, "but just take the money, we'd feel a thousand times happier, though no money or anything else could ever express our gratitude for all you are doing."

He still leaned against the table with folded

arms but the smile had given place to an expression of sadness.

"Have you both quite finished?" he asked when Hester had stopped for lack of breath.

"We never could finish talking about your kindness," put in Julie.

The Doctor raised his hand as if to waive that aside. "I have listened to your proposition," he said, "because I am a practical business man and I understand your spirit. It is the height of your ambition to be independent."

"Yes," they assented.

"When your father broke down," he continued, "I longed to take you all home and look after you. I was amply able to do it and he is my oldest and best friend. I would have done it, too, if you girls had not astonished me by displaying so much courage and such a determination to fight your own battles that I could only stand aside and watch you work out your own salvation."

"You have made the way easier all the time," said Julie tremulously.

The Doctor cleared his throat.

"I have been so glad to share a bit of the responsibility, but now my faithful little comrades want to shoulder it all."

"Oh, Dr. Ware, you don't think—" began Hester impulsively.

"Yes, I do think," he interrupted, "that you have the right idea and whatever my personal inclination may be, I like your spirit of independence and it shall be as you say."

Hester flung her arms about his neck and kissed him. "Do you know," she said brokenly, "Julie and I are getting so puffed up with conceit over our business prosperity that presently you will disown us altogether."

"Shall I?" holding her fast. "What do *you* think, Julie?" with a searching gaze into the face of the older girl who stood a little apart from them.

Julie flushed and turned her eyes away—telltale eyes like hers were not to be trusted. "I think," she said with a supreme effort to speak calmly, "I think we had better go upstairs for tea. Miss Ware will be wondering what has become of us."

When the Doctor learned that tea was brewing in the library he followed them upstairs and electrified his sister by handing about tea and taking a cup himself with as much complacency as if he were in the habit of dawdling around a tea-table every afternoon of his life. Miss Ware wished he hadn't come, for she had intended to ply the girls with questions about their work; questions which in the presence of her brother she hesitated to ask, standing, as she did, in con-

siderable awe of him. She did manage, while he was talking to Hester, to catechise Julie a little, but that young woman's answers were so evasive, yet withal so sweetly polite that Miss Ware felt very much as if she were hitting a rubber ball, which, while showing the imprint of her attack, bounded back every time to the starting point. It happened also that Dr. Ware having some notion of what his sister might be up to, rescued Julie from too prolonged a tête-à-tête and with infinite tact kept the conversation in such general channels that personalities were forgotten and Miss Ware quite shone in her desire to be agreeable. There are many persons who, given their own conversational way, manage in the course of an hour to reduce to a state of irritation every person in the room, yet who, guided and steered by a stronger force, rise to the best that is in them and produce such a favorable impression that one wonders how one ever thought them other than agreeable. It was thus with Miss Ware, who under the guidance of her brother, appeared to the girls in a new light, and she herself had the unusual sensation of regretting that they had taken so early a departure.

"I wish I had asked them to stay on to dinner," she said when they had gone.

"I wish you had," said the Doctor, accustomed to her after thoughts.

"Why didn't you suggest it?"

"I was not sure that it would be agreeable to you, Mary."

"Humph!" she said. Then critically, "Hester *is* extraordinarily pretty—and what an air! She's almost conspicuous. How is your scheme about Kenneth getting on?"

"It is not a 'scheme,' Mary. I wish you would not express it just that way. And I have concluded I am not the right person to go in for match-making. Think no more about it."

"Humph!" she said again.

"I doubt if either of the girls will care to marry," he volunteered.

"Girls are queer," she said sententiously.

"Are they?" he rejoined wearily. "I do not think I know."

CHAPTER XX

THAT spring would always be a memorable one both to the girls and the country at large, for momentous events followed one upon another in rapid succession. War was declared with Spain, as Kenneth had prophesied, and all the bustle and activity attendant upon the preparations of hostilities with a foreign power were felt throughout the nation.

Kenneth, believing such a crisis inevitable, had prepared to respond promptly to the first call for troops.

There had been a fierce tussle with his father when first he broached the subject, but by that time Mr. Landor had learned that Kenneth's was not a nature to be forced into subjection and heard him out with far more respect than would have been accorded him a year ago. Mr. Landor suggested, in the course of the talk, that it was a pity to leave the business just as he was mastering it; and Kenneth agreed with him. But all the patriotism in his nature was aroused and this, combined with Hester's inspiration and his naturally adventurous spirit, held him proof against his father's arguments. This strength

and decision were not lost upon the older man, who, having put forth every argument to keep his son at home, ended the discussion by saying, somewhat abruptly:

"When the call came in '61 I could not go. I had a father and mother dependent on me. I'm—I'm not dependent on you, Kenneth, and your country needs you. I should have been disappointed in you if you had not wanted to go."

"Thank you, father," with a hearty grip of the hand for he thought he understood the personal sacrifice his father was making, though, man-fashion, he said no word.

And so Kenneth used his influence toward the end he had in view, with the good result that when on that twenty-third day of April the President issued his first call for troops, he was given a commission as lieutenant in the crack cavalry troop of Radnor and ordered into the State camp to await developments.

The girls saw the troopers go. They happened to be in the business part of the city that afternoon and were attracted by groups of people standing about and talking excitedly. Further investigation, coupled with the sound of a bugle in the distance, caused them to take refuge on the nearest steps and wait with bated breath for the militia to appear. Electric cars

had stopped running, wagons rattled off into the side streets, leaving the main thoroughfare clear, and presently they came—a troop of cavalry followed by a regiment of infantry, the splendid column swinging along to the gay music of the band, whose medley of martial airs wound up suggestively with "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

The crowd broke into a great spontaneous cheer and cheered and cheered again, shouting until they were hoarse. On the sidewalks, steps, from windows all about, people craned their necks for a last look at the departing soldiers. Women waved their handkerchiefs and wept. Men raised their hats—aye, flung them high in the air—while every man, woman and child who could lay hand on a flag waved it in frantic demonstration. For staid decorous Radnor it was an ovation.

The Dale girls thrilled with excitement. Just as the cavalry passed their steps Julie grabbed Hester and said:

"Look at that officer just back of the men—isn't he stunning! And see how beautifully he manages that prancing horse! No, not over there, Hester,—this way, nearer us," excitedly, "the horse is dancing to the music and oh!—why, Hester Dale, it's Mr. Landor! Wave to him, quick! I want him to see us!"

They both waved, standing on tip-toe, and,

as if impelled by the instinct that warns us when those we love are near, he turned and saw them. There was a quick interchange of glances, a slight wave of the hand and he was gone.

"He *did* see us," exclaimed Julie. "I am so glad even if it is against the regulations for an officer to recognize people. Oh, aren't you glad we were down town! It is really living in war times and seeing for ourselves the things Daddy has described a thousand times!"

"I can't realize it," said Hester, looking rather flushed, "but I would not have missed it for anything in the world!"

When they got back to the house they found Jack in a fever of impatience waiting to waylay them.

"Did you see him? Did you see him?" he cried, stopping them at his door.

"Mr. Landor? yes," laughed Julie. "Did you?"

"Where were you? I was down at the Armory. Oh, please stop in here a moment till I tell you about it."

Thus urged, they went in.

"He was here," cried Jack, to whom there was only one he, "early this afternoon in his uniform and he asked for you; he wanted to say good-by, but I said you'd just gone out. I saw you both going up the street before he

came—and he could only stay a second 'cause the troops were ordered out and he thought I'd like to get around to the Armory and see them start off. And didn't I, just! I went lickety-split on my crutches nearly as fast as a boy could run," he cried, immensely proud of this achievement, "and I was there in time and got a front seat. A fellow on a grocery wagon asked me to sit up with him and I saw—everything," with a comprehensive sweep of his arms. "The horses and the officers and the men and all their friends crowding around the Armory and hanging on to some of them tight, and some of the ladies crying and gee! but it was great!"

"Well, you certainly were right in it, Jack," commented Hester.

"Should say I was! And pretty soon out came Mr. Landor—Lieutenant Landor," corrected Jack with great emphasis, "and an orderly was standing alongside the curb with his horse and before he mounted he saw me sitting in the wagon on the corner of the street and he came down and saluted as though I was his superior officer," Jack's eyes were fairly dancing out of his head, "and said good-by all over again. I wish you could have seen the crowd! They just gaped! and the boys nearly had a fit seeing me talking to an officer. And when he went off one of them said, 'Gee! he's a corker—he'll

knock the spots out of the Spaniards,' and I said, 'You bet!' That's awful slang, Miss Julie," apologetically, "but it's the truth."

Julie smiled. "We are getting our first glimpse of war, Jack, and it is pretty exciting for all of us."

"I'm crazy to go—I bet they'd take me for a drummer-boy if I could get rid of these," with a disgusted glance at his crutches. "I told Mr. Landor so and he said of course I wanted to go—every boy wanted to serve his country — but sometimes there was just as much to do for those who stayed at home as those who went. That the women and children must be looked after" (the air of protection which the superiority of his sex gave him would have been funny had he not been in such deadly earnest), "and," he continued, "he appointed me a guard of honor. I'm to take care of you!" He made this announcement with positive triumph.

"How splendid!" said Julie, realizing how much this feeling of importance meant to the restless boy who was longing to be off for the front.

"I'm to go and see his father too, and print a weekly bulletin full of what we're all doing and anything I can make up—just like the one I do for your father and he's going to write me from camp. Think of that! And I'm to get well as

fast as I can and study very hard and try to be a man when he gets back. And what do you suppose? No more office for me!"

"Jack, you are inventing!"

"Nope," delighted at her incredulity, "*he* had a talk with mother last week and I'm to go to school and then to college."

"That is the best news I've heard for many a day," said Julie, affectionately regarding the happy boy. "If you work hard and go to college I prophesy great things for you."

"If the war's still on, though, when I'm old enough and well enough, maybe I'd get to be a drummer-boy." In his present state of military ardor life held the promise of nothing greater than that.

When they had left him and were nearly at their own door they were stopped by the sound of his crutches on the stairs below. Hester ran back to see what he wanted.

"Don't come up, Jack," she called, running down to meet him. "Did we leave something behind?"

"It's this, Miss Hester," reaching out a note. "He gave it to me—I nearly forgot. Please forgive me," penitently.

"Of course, Jack," taking it from him and turning again she went upstairs.

It was only a thin sheet of paper, folded three-

cornered, on which in pencil was scrawled her name. But she opened it on the stairs with a mixture of curiosity and tenderness which she would have been at a loss to define had any analysis of her feelings been required of her.

"I had hoped to see you," it said, without any other beginning, "but that failing, I have stolen a moment here at the Armory to say good-bye. It was not a friend but I, myself, to whom you were such a help and inspiration that evening. When I come back will you let me thank you for that and—more? The bit of gold you gave me I am carrying with me as a mascot. Do you mind? And if I prove as fearless and brave a soldier as you I shall thank God for making me of the right stuff. Will you pray that it may be so? Good-bye."

She stood quite still for a moment when she had finished reading, then brushed her hand quickly over her eyes and went on into their apartment. Finding Julie she handed her the bit of paper and said gayly, though Julie thought there was a suspicious huskiness in her voice, "See, Julie dear, a note from a really, truly soldier." And before Julie could speak she whisked out of the room and until Bridget called her to dinner, was seen no more.

A month passed, during which, in spite of the excitement over war and the subsequent depression along certain lines of business, their work increased from day to day. And in the midst of

all this bustle and rush when each hour exacted of them the very limit of their endurance, Mr. Dale died. He went to sleep with God as peacefully as a little child. At first the girls could not believe it. They had grown so used to the long hours in which he slept, so accustomed to the paralysis which kept his mind and body apathetic, that they could not conceive that he would not wake again and turn his eyes fondly on them as before. When finally he was carried out of the little home and laid in his last resting place they began to realize that God had released him from his earthly thraldom and given them another saint in heaven. With characteristic courage they lived through those first days when the awful loneliness pressed so heavily upon them, and with characteristic determination took up their work struggling to go on as if nothing had happened. But it was hard—harder than any other sorrow which had come to them—for the whole incentive of their work was gone. It was as if the very mainspring of their lives had snapped and broken.

In the long solemn talks the girls had together at this time Julie urged that they must be as faithful to their father's precepts as they had tried to be while he was with them. And she dwelt very much on the fact that he *was* still with them, guiding and loving them as much as dur-

ing all those years before he was stricken down. And Hester believed this too for they had been taught the beauty of the inner, spiritual life that counts for immortality and makes all separation merely a transitory thing bridged over by love. So they felt their beloved father still with them, though Hester often brokenly whispered that working was robbed of its incentive now that they were no longer "making a home for Dad."

It must not be supposed that they were left alone in their affliction. On the contrary, friends sprang up in every direction. Women whom hitherto they had only regarded as customers and known most formally, now came forward with kindest words and thoughtful suggestions, while expressions of sympathy in the form of cards and flowers threatened to well-nigh deluge them. It was evident to the most casual observer that "those Dale girls" were persons of considerable importance. Unique as it was, they had made their place in Radnor, and the fact was given wide recognition. They themselves were fairly bewildered and overcome by so much demonstration from people from whom they expected nothing. That they were not insensible to its meaning was shown in their grateful appreciation of every word and act. Even the haughty Miss Davis, desiring to make reparation, chose this time to come and see them,

and Hester out of the fullness of her sorrowful heart accepted her repentant kiss and fell to talking of childish days.

Next to Dr. Ware there was no one so keenly conscious of or who so rejoiced over this capitulation of exclusive Radnor as the Lennoxes. As Mrs. Lennox wrote Kenneth Landor, most girls were what their position made them, but they had made their own position, winning the respect and admiration and at last the friendship of every one who knew them. He, hard at work drilling raw recruits in Virginia (for his troop had been ordered into a Southern camp) found time to write how glad of this he was and to the girls he sent a joint note of deepest sympathy.

The Driscoes wrote, of course, each in their own way. The girls half smiled over Cousin Nancy's letter—it was such a mixture of a belief in the retribution that overtakes the willful and an evident grief that the Major was no more. Colonel Driscoe wrote little but did much which developed later through Dr. Ware who unwarily let the cat out of the bag. And Dr. Ware, as might have been expected, did everything. This time the girls allowed him to plan and arrange and perform with them and for them the last loving offices for their father, feeling that it was his right.

Miss Ware was at this time in England and as the Doctor was living at his club, his time was more than ever at their disposal. Miss Ware had taken flight at this first note of war, indeed before the bugle sounded, for she had a very indifferent regard for her country and at all times preferred England. So the Doctor came and went without comment, and a month after Mr. Dale's death he was summoned hastily one morning by Bridget.

Julie lay ill. He could not find that she was in any great pain and he had not expected that she would be. He knew immediately that the thing he had been so long dreading had taken place. Her tired nerves refused to do their work at last—the delicate mechanism of her body had stopped.

Hester hovered about, wide-eyed and solicitous and then it was that more than ever Dr. Ware took things into his own hands and said a few things to Hester which caused that young woman to gasp with astonishment and fling her arms about his neck in her usual impetuous fashion.

CHAPTER XXI

UNDER the most favorable auspices a military camp entails labor, but to the volunteers who assembled in Virginia that spring and broke ground for what afterward became known as Camp Alger, it was a tremendous undertaking. The hewing of wood and clearing of underbrush which it entailed was scarcely bargained for by the enlisted man fresh from civilian life, who, nevertheless, went at it with the energy characteristic of Uncle Sam's boys the country over, as a result of which, by the end of May, many of the regiments were as well quartered as if they were enjoying the customary summer outing at their State camp-grounds at home. These, of course, were the militia now mustered into the United States service and awaiting orders to follow the regulars into Spanish territory.

Troop D of Kenneth Landor's squadron had unquestionably the finest site on the reservation; a wooded knoll stretching down into a field of grass—green when the troopers came but worn down to bare earth in the first month of their encampment. Beneath the shade trees on the hill-

side the officers pitched their conical tents, the men stretching out through the field below in two troop streets, back of which on either side were picketed their horses.

It was a warm June afternoon, but a little breeze stirred the branches of the trees and blew with delicious freshness over the knoll, on which, stretched out at full length, lay Kenneth Landor. It was an off hour in camp and, barring the sentries who were tramping up and down their posts, every man was taking advantage of it, some comfortably lounging like Kenneth on the grass, others laboriously writing home letters filled with their latest exploit. For they were just back from a three days' practice march along the Potomac, during which they had spent their time in fighting the infantry they met on the road and swimming their horses in the river; and this first bit of mimic warfare could not fail to be of interest to the home people.

Kenneth had enjoyed the march hugely. He liked action and chafed, as did all the men, under the monotony of their enforced encampment, although realizing full well that the troop would be sent to the front as soon as was deemed expedient. He was thinking, as he lay on his back gazing skyward, of what he had once heard a veteran say,—that war was largely made up of soldier housekeeping. That might be true,

but he hoped he should come in for some stiff fighting before he got through. These interesting speculations so engrossed him that he scarcely noticed the mail orderly going the rounds until turning suddenly on his elbow he saw the man coming toward him. This trooper, detailed as mail orderly, was no other than Charley Bemis, whom we last saw at the Earle-Truxton wedding, but so strictly was the etiquette of military life maintained in camp that the man on approaching, saluted his superior officer, received an acknowledging salute, delivered a letter and turned away without a word.

The envelope was addressed in Jack's round sprawling hand and Kenneth prepared himself for a comfortable perusal of the weekly bulletin which the boy wrote, edited and printed with faithful regularity and which never failed to be of absorbing interest to the man who received it. This time, however, there was no printed sheet, but a letter written apparently at fever heat.

"DEAR LIEUTENANT," (it began, with military terseness), "I'm too upset to do the paper, though I'll try to soon, but you won't wonder when I tell you. *They're gone!* I can't realize it myself and I wish I didn't have to—it's all so sudden and so lonesome I just want to go off and die!

Dr. Ware did it. He and Bridget packed them off before they could say Jack Robinson. She's gone, too, so has he—down to Wavertree Hall, their cousin's plantation in Virginia. You see, Miss Julie broke down, though she wouldn't let any of us say she was ill, and Mrs. Driscoe urged them

to come there and Colonel Driscoe wrote Dr. Ware and sent him the money to buy their tickets and said he mustn't tell and he should rely upon him to get them off. Miss Hester told me all that. She laughed, the way she always does, you know, and said their cousin Driscoe and Dr. Ware together were too much for them. She said they meant to have a good rest and get Miss Julie strong and then come back to their work again but Gee! I wish they didn't have to—it's such a fearful grind.

It's awful without them, and Peter Snooks gone too! Lieutenant Landor, what's a guard of honor to do with nothing to guard? There's mother, of course, and Mr. Landor, but they don't like me bothering around the way those girls did. They never minded. I've left off my crutches and I'm digging at my books, but I'm going to be a drummer boy yet, you bet!

Please send me the latest news from the front. I think it's *great* to be a soldier! JACK."

P. S.—Mother says it's a girl's trick to add a postscript, but they're down there near you somewhere. Wouldn't you love to see them, just! They went to Dunn Loring the way you did and had to drive a ways into the country. Thought you'd like to know."

The varied sensations which surged through Kenneth as he finished reading are difficult to describe. Paramount was the joyful surprise that Hester was somewhere in the vicinity, followed by the overwhelming desire to see her without loss of time. This he knew as he came to think it over quietly, was impossible. He could not take the initiative or seem to thrust himself upon her uninvited. She, of course, must know that his troop was still at Camp Alger and if she cared to see him—but did she care?

That baffling question haunted him a week. Then came one day a note brought by a small darky who was inclined to ride rough-shod over the sentries because, as he condescended to explain to them, he had a note from the young missis to deliver right into the Lieutenant's own hand. A formal, brief little note Hester had written, but it was enough, for it told him where they were and that their cousin Mrs. Driscoe would be most happy to have him ride over and call.

He went that evening, inquiring the way in Dunn Loring and soon found himself riding up a long avenue between rows of locust trees, at the end of which he could just distinguish a large brick mansion with a square portico and broad verandahs at either end. When he drew up at the house he discovered a small cavalcade ahead of him. At least half a dozen horses were standing hitched in various parts of the driveway, and following the custom of the place he tied his own with the rest. Then he rapped vigorously at the knocker to announce his arrival. By that general factotum George Washington he was ushered immediately across a huge square hall and out onto a verandah where a gay group of people were laughing and chatting together. His first impression was a vivid effect of blue uniforms and white muslin gowns while from out of this medley a dignified, matronly figure came

forward with his card in her hand and said in hearty Southern fashion:

"How do you do, Mr. Landor? It is a pleasure to welcome you to Wavertree Hall. Hester, my dear, here is one of your Radnor friends."

Hester slipped down from the railing where she had been sitting and shyly gave him her hand. Somehow, for a moment he scarcely knew her with that strange light in her eyes. Then there was a general interchange of greetings, for Julie called him over to the hammock where she was half reclining and Dr. Ware rose up from his seat beside her and nearly shook the arm off him; and there was dear little Nannie waiting to have him presented and the Colonel, who laughingly consented to wait his turn, and all the guests who enviously regarded this brother officer upon whom, for the moment, all interest centered.

He saw very little of Hester that night. She was the gayest of the gay and seemed to evade him with the old elusiveness which had been so marked in the first days of their acquaintance. So he turned for comfort to Julie, whose convalescence kept her a little apart from the lively group and whose genuine interest in him seemed to the distracted fellow almost the sweetest thing in the world.

He rode off rather early, in company with the

other officers, whom he found belonged to a Virginia regiment encamped at Alger, and when the gay little cavalcade had waved their hands in parting and were lost to sight Dr. Ware said to Julie:

"There was not a man of them who could compare with Kenneth—he is superb!"

"Yes," she assented, "he is. I never saw him look so handsome as he does in his uniform."

The others had strayed into the great hall, and they were alone on the verandah.

"Julie," he said gently, "you begin to feel more like your old self now, do you not, dear?"

"Oh! yes," she said, "I feel stronger and stronger every day. But," with a little laugh, "I am in danger of being spoiled—you all wait on me so."

"It is a good thing to get that independent young spirit of yours into subjection," he laughed. "We are all making the most of the opportunity."

"Do you notice how cousin Nancy has changed?" she asked. "She does not eye Hester and me so curiously as she did at first. When we came she scarcely took her eyes off us for days. I think she was prepared to see freaks and could not readjust her mind to the fact that we looked and behaved just as usual. To cook for

a living and still be a lady was an anomaly beyond her comprehension, but she is beginning to realize such things can be, though she wouldn't acknowledge it for the world. Dear cousin Nancy! She's so good and so contradictory!"

"I shall never forget her kindness in keeping me here," he said heartily. "Think of my merely meaning to see you safe at Wavertree Hall, and being taken possession of by her and made one of the family! Her hospitality is unbounded."

Presently he said: "I have been waiting for you to feel strong enough to have a little serious talk, Julie. What would you say if you were not to go back to your work for another year?"

"Oh, we must go back," she said. "Please don't think we'll allow ourselves to get demoralized or unfitted for work because of all this!"

"I'm not likely to think that, dear, but your cousin Driscoe has had a long talk with me and he urges me to persuade you all to remain with them a year, at least. He says now they've got you here they want to keep you and you'll be all the better fitted to work, he thinks, for a long rest. He says he has not mentioned this to your cousin Nancy because he will not have her bothering you to do what you don't want to—"

"The dear, blessed man," she exclaimed.

"And he didn't want to bother you himself

but he thought if I threw the weight of my influence on his side you might be persuaded. He doesn't know, does he?" wistfully, "what little influence I really have with you two independent girls!"

"Oh, don't say that!" she protested; "it isn't fair! And I do not believe way down deep in your heart you would urge our staying on here so long. You know too well how hard we have struggled to get started to advise our letting the work all slip away. Besides, what would you do without us all that time, I'd like to know," she said playfully. "You'd be terribly lonesome, you know you would and—oh no," suddenly growing serious again, "we must go back and take up the work and push on with it, but it isn't the same—it just can't be without Daddy!" She turned her face away but not before he had detected the brimming eyes.

"Dear," he said, putting out his arms, "if only you would let me"—he stopped, pulling himself together with a mighty effort. "I—I—"

"You are so good to me," she faltered, "so good!"

"I'm far from good to let you get excited tonight," he said, struggling to speak calmly. "You are not strong yet, dear, but I wanted to speak to you about your cousin Driscoe's proposition before I went away!"

"Away?" she repeated as if scarcely understanding, "must you go away?"

"I think so, dear, in a day or two. Tell me what I can do for you in Radnor."

"Radnor?" musingly, "how far away that seems! Yes, you can do something for me there—two things. See Jack and tell him all about us and hunt up Mr. Renshawe and tell him we've nearly won the day. Hester and I have been maneuvering in his behalf on all occasions. Tell him Nannie treads on air and that any day he may expect a little flag of truce, for cousin Nancy shows signs of surrendering. Will you tell him all that?"

"Julie dear," bending toward her with a world of tenderness in his voice, "Julie dear, do you never want anything for yourself?"

"Yes," very faintly.

"Can you tell me, little girl?"

"Yes," reaching out her hands with a little childish gesture,—"you."

"Julie!"

He took her in his arms and for a moment there was silence while out in the moonlit trees a mocking-bird called to its mate.

"My little girl," he said at last tremulously, "is it really true?"

"Oh, how could I do it," she whispered, "how could I!"

"Love me? I am sure I don't know and I scarcely dare believe it. Look at me, sweetheart and tell me it is true."

She raised her beautiful honest eyes and let him look into the depths of her pure soul. "It is so natural to love you and so beautiful," she said simply.

"But I am no longer a young man, dear. What right have I to ask you to give your young life to me?"

"You didn't ask me," with a little fluttering laugh, "I asked you. It is very humiliating for you to remind me of it."

"Julie!" He was holding her fast as if he never meant to let her go.

"You are not old," she protested. "It is not years but the spirit that counts, and you are young—just as I am old for my years, and there is no one like you but Hester in the world. I have been loving you so long unconsciously, that I don't know when it began."

"Neither do I, dear."

"But I knew you so well," she continued, "I was afraid you would have some mistaken sense of honor that would prevent your ever telling me you loved me and I just couldn't bear that." Julie's head was hidden on his shoulder.

"You little saint," stroking her hair tenderly, "you always seemed to belong to me, as if you

were a part of my very life, but I have never felt I was worthy of such a blessing and I have reminded myself a thousand times this past winter that I could only have one place in your affections—the old family friend. When Monsieur Grémond came along I realized more than ever that I had no right to day dreams—that some other man would claim you and carry you away."

"Did you want me to marry him?" she asked.

"I wanted your happiness above everything."

"Do *you* never want anything for yourself?" she asked saucily.

"You," was his answer, at which they both laughed with the delicious sense of their own humor which only lovers know.

Then they had a long quiet talk together about the future, and he told her how he thanked God she was willing to give herself into his keeping; how he wanted to flood her life with sunshine and how blessed he should be if she and Hester would make for him such a home as they had made for Dad. And they spoke long and tenderly of the man who had been as noble a friend as a father and who would always be a loved memory to them both. Then she slipped away from him and leaving him to dream of a reality that was beyond all imagining, went up to her room in search of Hester.

CHAPTER XXII

THE change to Virginia was perhaps appreciated by no one more than Peter Snooks, that by no means unimportant member of the Dale family, whose activity knew no bounds. He raced madly about the plantation, to the consternation of the chickens and the terror of Mrs.. Driscoe, who, never having owned dogs, fancied he was going to take up everything by the roots. But Peter Snooks behaved admirably. To be sure, he chased chickens, but what canine could resist that temptation? And it was recorded to his credit that he never hurt one of them. With Julie not well and Bridget and the two younger girls scarcely leaving her, Peter Snooks was forced to seek companionship out of the family—quite a new order of things—and chose George Washington, greatly to the delight of that ebony mite. What games they had out in the carriage-house and what antics the two cut upon the lawn playing circus for the edification of the people on the verandah! Hester herself was sometimes inspired to go into the ring and put Snooks through his tricks, which were

many, herself performing some ridiculous caper which was received with wild applause. But Snooks had the best time when Hester and Nannie went riding, and he raced alongside and often way ahead, to his own evident delight though not always to the comfort of the horses.

Nannie, these days, was the happiest girl in the County, for she had her two cousins whom she adored and every prospect of a speedy adjustment of her love affair. She nearly hugged Julie to death whenever she thought of it and confided to Hester when they went off together that being engaged was just the loveliest thing in the world.

It would have been impossible to find two girls in greater contrast than Hester and Nannie, for all they were such chums. Nannie, in her white frocks and big sun hats, was a sweet little maiden whose soft brown eyes did not belie her disposition. She had a soft, drawling voice and dear little clinging ways that made the Colonel's sobriquet of "Puss" seem most fitting. She was fast growing to womanhood, but was in all things childishly appealing, though that she was not without character was shown in various ways, culminating in her loyalty to Sidney Renshawe in spite of the painful opposition.

Hester wore white muslin frocks and big hats, too—relics of their last year's Paris shopping. It had always been the avowed wish of their

father that in the event of his dying before them they should not wear black. He had the strongest aversion to the garb of mourning and the girls remembered and respected his wishes. So they had made no change in their wardrobe, though since they had come down to Virginia they confined themselves almost wholly to white.

Simple enough these frocks were, but Hester wore hers with an air that gave them something of her personality and made her distinctive wherever she appeared. There was never anything nondescript about Hester. And her moods were so many and so varied that her cousin Nancy, who did not in the least understand her, told the Colonel despairingly that she must be a witch—there certainly was not a drop of Fairleigh blood in her. Julie, forced to be quiet through indisposition, was regarded by her cousin as really quite patrician and not in the least—and this was a wonderful admission—not in the least vulgarized by work. Colonel Driscoe agreed to her last statement and let the rest go. He found that the simplest way to avoid argument.

Kenneth Landor became a frequent caller and grew to be an immense favorite with the household, but he seldom had the satisfaction of more than a few words with Hester. One morning he rode over and deemed the Fates more than kind

when, finding Julie on the porch, she sent him down into the garden, where she said he would find Hester helping George Washington pick blackberries.

His first glimpse of her was a sun-bonnet; then two sadly stained hands reaching up among the bushes, then a white figure in sharp relief against the green; then Peter Snooks barked and she turned and saw him.

"Good morning," she said sweetly, from out of her sun-bonnet, giving him a look that seemed propitious. "Have a blackberry?"

"Thanks, don't mind if I do. May I help pick?"

"If you like. I can't stop, you know, for old Aunt Rachael is expecting them for dinner. We're great cronies, she and I. I steal out to the kitchen quarters often to see her when Cousin Nancy is not looking."

"Do you mind pushing back that sun-bonnet?" he asked beseechingly. "I know you're inside of it somewhere and I should like to see you."

She laughed and pushed it half way back. "If that does not suit you I'll take it off altogether."

"Oh, don't do that, it's so—so nice," not daring to say how adorable he thought she was in it. "I like it the way you have it now. I

never knew sun-bonnets could be so frilled and furbelowed."

"It is Nannie's—she is making Julie and me each one. She says they are a fad this year. They are pretty, aren't they? But somehow they feel hot and then I just tie the strings loose and let it hang down my back like that. Cousin Nancy says a girl who will do that has absolutely no regard for her complexion. It would be funny, wouldn't it, if I took to worrying about things like that? Why, where is George Washington? Gone? And you're shockingly lazy! You haven't picked a berry since you came!"

"I—I beg your pardon," scarcely able to take his eyes off her, "I really mean to help."

"How is Captain Loomis?" she asked, seeing that he seemed unable to do much of anything but stare at her. "Have you seen him to-day?"

"That little Virginian? He haunts our camp and talks to me by the hour about you! He is madly in love with you."

"He is too silly to be anything else," munching a berry.

"I do not like your way of putting it."

"I mean," she explained, swinging her sun-bonnet by one string, "that he does not know how to be sensible and I do not like him well enough to bother to teach him, so, as he is

around a good deal I have to politely put up with him. I should think you knew me well enough by this time to know how I hate silly people."

"Do you ever politely put up with me?"

"Sometimes," teasingly.

"Hester, Hester," called a fresh young voice, "are you down there? Come up out of the garden quick! It's so cool this morning father says he'll take us over to camp to see that fascinating Mr. Landor."

Hester ducked her head in her sunbonnet and fled.

When she reappeared half an hour later she was in her riding habit, looking so trig and tailor-made and altogether conventional that Kenneth wondered if she could be the same mischievous sprite who had run away from him in the garden.

It was arranged that Landor should escort them over, and the adroit Hester managed that he should start off in advance with Nannie, she and the Colonel bringing up the rear. Julie and Mrs. Driscoe waved them off, then returned to their work of sewing for the soldiers. For Mrs. Driscoe was the president of a ladies' patriotic aid society and found plenty for herself and the girls to do.

Hester looked forward with eagerness to reach-

ing Camp Alger, which, though only six miles distant from Wavertree Hall, they had not yet visited. She rode along at first chatting gayly to the Colonel but at last was forced to keep her mouth closed on account of the dust. And who that experienced it, will ever forget the dust of that June in Virginia! Inches deep on the roads it lay in a thick brown powder which, at the slightest disturbance from man or beast, rose in choking waves, covering and submerging everything; while in the immediate vicinity of Alger, where the sentries warned every one that a gait other than a walk was not permitted in and about the camp, it smothered them to the verge of suffocation.

They approached their destination by way of the little village of Falls Church, where over the rough and winding road traveled a constant procession. It was said by the darkies in Virginia that spring, that all the "poor white trash" in Fairfax County had abandoned their farms and taken to "toting" people to Camp Alger. Vehicles of every description were going back and forth carrying people from the station to the camp, sometimes officers, sometimes soldiers, often visitors; in every case the seating capacity of buggy, carryall or wagon was stretched to its utmost capacity. Intermingled with this motley array were the army wagons loaded with camp

provisions and paraphernalia, on the top of which usually perched two or more soldiers. These, drawn by four mules and driven by an antiquated darky, seemed to Hester the most interesting thing on the road, though possibly she made an exception in favor of the mounted orderlies flashing in and out through the crowd or an occasional mounted officer who saluted Kenneth and stared at the girls in open admiration.

As they crossed the picket lines, the camp lay before them—row after row of tents (reminding Hester of the card houses she used to build when she was little) not "gleaming white" like the tents of story but brown with the dust. Desiring to show them about before dismounting Kenneth took them on by his troop and through the roads leading by the various regiments. Of the thirty thousand men, more than half were encamped in the fields, now resembling arid plains, so destitute were they of vegetation; while the rest, more fortunate, were scattered through the surrounding woods, lost to sight except for the flutter of a flag above the trees.

The party did not attempt to cover the full length of the camp, for the sun was getting very hot and Kenneth was anxious to get them back to his troop in time for dinner. This, her first meal at an officer's mess and in a tent, was one of the most novel and delightful Hester had

every known. Kenneth counted it the second time they had broken bread together and was blissfully happy. When it was over, in a fit of excessive magnanimity he hunted up Charley Bemis who he knew would like to see Hester again and brought him up to his tent, where the Colonel and the girls were resting. A little later they all strolled together over to the troopers' quarters, young Bemis being anxious to show them the troop mascot, a stunning bull-terrier. Down here, too, were the horses, picketed back of the tents, while working among them were several troopers, one of whom Hester especially noticed tall and very blonde, his skin tanned to a deep brown. He wore the regulation campaign outfit, but his shirt was sleeveless. About his neck was knotted a yellow handkerchief, his soft hat was pushed well back with an upward turn to the front and he was busily engaged grooming his horse.

"That man," said Kenneth, seeing that Hester observed him, "is the president of our coaching club at home and drives the best horses in Radnor. It's great the way he, and in fact all the fellows have buckled down to work. He's a chum of mine and I'd like immensely to have him meet you; I think you would enjoy him, too, but I won't call him over. It would embarrass him to death to be caught like that."

Hester looked at the trooper in admiration.

"Let's get out of the way before he discovers us," she said tactfully, "though I'd like to march straight over there and tell him how proud I am of him."

Nannie, who had ideas of her own, rode off with her father when they started home. A mile or two on, the Colonel stopped and waited for them to overtake them, when he said, if Hester and Landor would excuse them he and Nannie would stop at the house in front of which they had halted and make a call. So the girl and man rode on alone through the beautiful woods which led to—was it happiness or only Wavertree Hall?

"Have you enjoyed it?" he asked when they had gone a little way.

"Oh! so much."

"Even if you had to politely put up with me?"

"Well, there were others, you see. Mr. Bemis, and all those charming officers at dinner. Now I think of it, you never took us to the Virginia camp. Is Captain Loomis away?" looking up at him as if the whereabouts of that individual was the thing which most concerned her.

He laid his hand for a moment over hers. "It's no use," he said, "you can't put me off with Loomis or any other man."

The intense subdued manner in which he said

it deepened the color in her cheeks, but her dimples played mischievously.

"What are you going to do about it?" she asked.

"Hester," he replied, "do you remember a night in April when you and I talked together and you were kind and said things that would inspire a man to do anything? It was the first time you had ever been serious with me and you thought it was the first time I knew of the serious side of you, but that was not true. You turned my life into a new, better channel from the moment I first set eyes on you, dear. And I loved you so that night on the coach that I didn't know how I was ever going to get through without telling you, but I didn't want to take advantage of your goodness and I knew you cared nothing for me, though I was determined you should some day." His voice rang out in the masterful way she had so often berated to Julie. "I am telling you this now because my opportunities of seeing you are so few and soon they may end altogether. Oh! Hester," he cried, finding it impossible to restrain himself any longer, "couldn't you learn to love me a little before I go away?"

She had listened with eyes gazing straight ahead of her. As he finished she turned and looked at him fearlessly.

"Are you quite sure I have not learned already?" she said. And then as he was about to speak, "No, no, do not answer me. I cannot answer the question myself. Sometimes I like you and sometimes I want to run away from you and sometimes—sometimes—"

He held his breath and waited.

But she did not finish it.

"We should never get on," she said argumentatively, "we quarrel all the time. At least you do—I've an angelic disposition," complacently.

"I quarrel with you? How could I!" endeavoring to fall in with her mood. "It is you who say shocking things to me, you bad thing; and sometimes, ah! sometimes, dear, you do hurt."

She touched him impulsively. "It is only teasing. I never mean to hurt—I wouldn't do it intentionally for the world." How penitent and sweet her voice was!

"Then won't you be kind to me, please, and love me a little bit?"

"A little bit? Would that satisfy you?"

"No," honestly, "it would not. Oh! my dear, I will be very patient if only you will try."

"I don't have to," she said.

"No," despairingly, "you don't have to.'

"Because—because—I do."

The ambiguity of this might have been mys-

tifying to any but a drowning man ready to clutch at a straw. Kenneth was raised to a seventh heaven of bliss and promptly kissed her; at which she blushed furiously and pushed him away.

"You must not believe everything I say," she protested.

"But I do and I want to and I shall," exultantly. "Oh, my dear, my dear, will you say it all over again?"

"Certainly not," with pretended severity. And then with a light happy laugh, "Do you remember how I snubbed you on the street corner the day you met me at Dr. Ware's?"

"Do I? Well, I should say I did! But you were even worse at Jack's. You plunged me into the depths of despair, from which I never should have arisen if you hadn't been so charming at Mrs. Lennox's musicale. That night I began to take notice again, as it were."

"Notice of Jessie Davis? I heard you were in love with her."

"As if I had eyes for any one but you! I used to fairly haunt dear old Jack's place in the hope of running across you, but you always managed to elude me."

"I used to think at first," she said seriously, "that you were just curious about us, because we were poor and earned our own living and were

not like the girls in your set, and I resented it. That made me nasty to you, though I liked you all the time. Then, well,—do you know what I believe made me care for you? If you laugh," earnestly, "I'll never forgive you. It was because you took such care of me at the wedding and never offered me a bit of cake! You suspected we had made it, didn't you? And I thought any man who had tact enough for that would be my undoing and I should not wonder," with a swift look from under her long lashes, "if it were true, but you will never tell a soul I told you, will you?" beseechingly. "It's a secret—the undoing, you know."

"Darling," he said, "I knew more about you and your work than you thought and that is why it was like wrenching my heart out to come away. I wanted to stay there where I could work for you and wait and hope that I might make your life easier. Then when you talked to me that night I knew that whether you ever loved me or not you would want me to go."

"Yes," she said.

"And now if you only loved me enough to marry me I might at least leave you my name and the protection of my father, whose home would gladly open to you and Julie if he knew. *Couldn't* you do it, dear heart?"

"I—I don't know," she said so low that he

could scarcely hear her. "I do love you, but it is all so new and strange that I cannot realize what it means or even if it means as much as it should to the man I marry. I want to be honest—and you offer me so much that I don't know what to say. I don't love you as I love Julie, and perhaps after that you will not want me to love you at all."

"Yes, dear, I shall. If you care for me in any sort of way I am thankful and love is a thing that grows and grows. Some day I believe you will love me as much as you do Julie, but in a different way. There is room in your heart, dear, for both of us if you will only let me in."

"That is just the way Julie puts it," she answered. "She is going to marry Dr. Ware."

"She is? Jove! what an ideal match!"

"That's what I think. I would not have believed that I could contemplate sharing Julie and be as happy about it as I am. The night she told me I danced for joy! She needs a man to take care of her, and I love him with all my heart; it changes nothing inwardly and everything outwardly. I am going to live with them but I shall not mind being dependent on them for awhile. At first I thought I couldn't, but they have made me promise. Dr. Ware is so dear. He says what is his, is Julie's, and what's Julie's is mine, and," laughing, "there is no getting

around that, is there? Julie and I have always gone shares. Besides, I'm going to study to be a trained nurse when Julie is married. I couldn't just sit down and be idle the rest of my days."

"Thank God your work is over!"

"Not my work but that work. No one will ever know how hard it was; there was so little profit in most of the things we made that we could not afford to hire the necessary assistance and had to take the brunt of everything ourselves. We should have kept on until we 'died in our tracks,' to quote Bridget, if it had been necessary, but I thank God, too, that we are not obliged to. It taught us a great many things, the poverty and hardship and all," she continued, feeling his interest, "and we shall be able to understand life and help people a great deal better because of it. Julie and I have had so many talks together both with Dr. Ware here and since he went North about all the things we mean to do. We look forward to a very busy life."

"I am supremely glad that things have come out this way, dear," he said, "only," wistfully, "all these plans make me feel as if you had little need of me. Won't you please," gazing pleadingly in her eyes which shone steadfastly into his, "won't you please see if you can't make a place somewhere for me?"

Far off through the woods came the note of a bugle. Hester drew in her breath.

"Perhaps," she said softly as they turned in the avenue, "I do need you and want you, too. Will you wait and see?"

CHAPTER XXIII

THERE was no announcement of Julie's engagement except to the household of Wavertree Hall. Her marriage was likely to take place early in the summer, for Dr. Ware was to attend a medical convention in California and wanted to take her with him. In the event of his doing this, Hester and Bridget would join them later, for Mrs. Driscoe wanted to be off, as was her custom, to the Springs and Hester shrank from going into a scene of gayety. There seemed to be no reason why this plan should not be carried out, for Julie had entirely recovered and except for the shadow of sadness left by her father's death, was quite herself again. She knew it would be their beloved Daddy's wish that she should shape herself to the events of her life in just the way she would have done had he been actually among them, and many and many a time her new happiness was glorified by the thought that he knew and was rejoicing too.

When Hester came and told her of that ride through the woods with Kenneth, her cup was filled to overflowing. For Julie understood her

sister better than the girl understood herself and she knew the love she now bore Kenneth would "grow and grow," as he had said, until it became a powerful factor in her life.

So finally Julie's wedding day was fixed and the day before, Dr. Ware with the Lennoxes and, as a joyful surprise above all things, Jack, arrived on the scene. The Doctor told her that this was the Driscoes' idea—to bring them down and surprise her, as Cousin Nancy's guests. As Mrs. Driscoe said to Mrs. Lennox, who laughingly protested against such an invasion:

"Virginia is the heart of the country, my dear Mrs. Lennox, and we are the heart of Virginia—welcome to Wavertree Hall." She was heard to remark afterward to the Colonel that that charming individual looked like a thorough-bred Virginian.

As for Jack, a more ecstatic boy never trod on earth. The girls laughed and cried over him. So did Bridget, who gave him such a hearty smack that he nearly hugged the head off her.

There were other arrivals also, that day at Dunn Loring, for Mr. Landor had come down to have a look at Kenneth, and Sidney Renshawe was once more at the Blakes' plantation.

The latter called at Wavertree Hall that afternoon and Mrs. Driscoe was in such a good humor over the charming, aristocratic Mrs. Len-

nox and the little excitement of guests which delighted her hospitable soul that she actually shook hands with him and asked him to join their party that afternoon—they were going over to camp to see Mr. Landor. That bit of cordiality was enough for Renshawe. Enough, too, for dear little Nannie, who had witnessed this meeting with mingled fear and delight.

They arrived at camp just before parade and at Kenneth's tent was an elderly man who proved to be his father. In the general introductions which followed, Kenneth's pleasure was very great in this meeting of Hester and his father. She began talking to him at once in her bright, vivacious way, and what was really remarkable,—for he never had the faintest idea what to say to girls and seldom encountered them, he talked to her quite at his ease. But then, this wily young woman touched now and then on Kenneth—just enough to start him on the subject nearest his heart. It was very near her heart, too. But when had the stern, impassive Caleb Landor talked so freely of his son before?

As they sat under the "fly" which made a shelter in front of the tent, the girls observed down the line the colors standing in front of the Captain's quarters and it thrilled them with the pride of patriotism to see all the men and offi-

cers in going to and fro lift their hats and pass bare-headed before the flag.

The routine of camp was very interesting to Dr. Ware who had lived through it, to the girls who had all their lives heard of it, and to Jack, who still hoped to be a part of it in spite of his years. So it was a very talkative if somewhat weary party that returned to Wavertree Hall.

Late that evening there came tearing up the avenue a mounted orderly. He brought a note for Miss Hester Dale which required an immediate answer. She opened it quickly. At the end she leaned against the pillar as if for support. Then she called Julie out from the garden where she and Dr. Ware were strolling and said unsteadily:

"Read that, Julie dear. I want you to know before I send my answer."

Julie read:

"Sweetheart, my orders have come. Since you left I have heard officially. I am to be transferred and leave for Tampa to-morrow afternoon to join the Rough Riders, who embark in a few days for Santiago. Do you think, dear—could you, would you marry me before I go? Would that dear little Julie let you and me go with her and the Doctor to-morrow and make our lives one in the sight of God? Oh, say yes, say yes! But not unless you are sure, dear. I had rather wait a dozen years than have you give yourself to me under protest. Whatever you say, dear, I shall believe is for the best. But, oh! if you could— KENNETH."

Julie took her sister in her arms.

"Hester, darling, have you decided?"

"Yes, Julie."

"You and Kenneth will come to-morrow with Philip and me?"

"Yes, Julie."

"Oh! Hester, my blessed, blessed girlie, it is the most beautiful thing in the world!"

There was very little sleep for the girls that night. They sat for a long while in the window-seat up in their room where the scent of the honeysuckle came drifting in, talking softly of the past and laying plans whereby their happiness should go out into the world like a strong search-light to illumine dark places.

"It is not always those commonly called the poor who are most in need, Hester. It is the refined, sensitive people who have seen better days, who suffer most. And we have learned, too, dear, how super-sensitive adversity makes one. I am glad we know these things, aren't you, even though the learning of them nearly tore our hearts out? It has broadened and developed us and is going to make us helpful women in the world."

"And oh! Julie dear," replied Hester, "isn't it beautiful to think how we shall be able, both of us, through our—our husbands," stumbling over the word, "to do things for people. Little

things and big things to lighten people's burdens and give them courage, just as so many times courage was given to us."

"Yes, darling. God is putting the power in our hands—it is for us to use it wisely."

Presently Hester said, "I am glad we won our own place in Radnor before going back there again under different circumstances. It makes me feel that we amounted to something and that if it ever happened that misfortune of that sort came again we should be able to keep our heads above water, to turn our fingers to account. Look at them, Julie," holding up her hands for inspection, "they are not the same things at all."

"No dear, they have lost their porcelain transparency which used to be such a pride and delight but I like them better as they are. They are strong, capable hands, now, for all their daintiness which you never can lose. I have been thinking lately, that one's hand can be as indicative of character as one's face. I hope yours and mine will not belie us."

"We did not much think when we came out of the flat that day that we should never go back there, did we, old girl? I can't realize it yet. It seems as if all those pots and kettles and pans and bottles would swoop down and whisk us off to 'The Hustle' when we get back to Radnor. Oh! my dear, we *did* 'hustle'! The name did

not belie that place! Down here in this drowsy Virginia I sometimes wonder if it was really we who worked like that."

"I know," Julie said, "I know, too, that we should have worked right on there to the best of our ability all our lives if it had been so ordered, but I am thankful, thankful that our energies can act in another way. We shall have a great deal to do, dear, and the wisdom of an older experience than ours to help us do it and all the time Daddy watching over his little girls."

And so at last they lay down to rest, these two little comrades whose heads and hearts were full of joyous anticipation of a broader field of action, a glorious life campaign.

Nothing could exceed the simplicity of the wedding that lovely June morning. Flanked on either side by Dr. Ware and Kenneth, the girls walked down the avenue to the gate and across the road with those nearest and dearest in attendance, to the little chapel where for generations the Fairleighs had worshiped and where the previous autumn their father had put in a memorial window to their mother. The gardens and the woods for miles around had been stripped of flowers to decorate the chancel, which took on a thousand lights as the mellow sunshine poured in through the stained glass windows.

Little Nannie stood up with them—she and Sidney Renshawe, and the dear old Colonel during the ceremony was forced more than once to take off his glasses and wipe them carefully. The girls were without ornament save that each carried a great bunch of white roses gathered in the garden at Wavertree Hall. Julie wore a certain white mulle gown that the Doctor loved while Hester, to please Kenneth, the simple muslin frock in which she had picked blackberries.

"A bride in a frock just out of the wash-tub!" cried Cousin Nancy aghast. She had never dreamed of such a total disregard of the conventionalities. But when she found Mrs. Lennox was on Hester's side she demurred no longer.

Mr. Landor sat with the Lennoxes and many a strange sensation took hold of him as he gazed first at Kenneth and then at Hester and back again at his stalwart son.

Bridget occupied a front seat in a state of perfect beatitude. She was the first to receive a kiss from the brides when the ceremony was over. Jack was there, of course, immensely relieved at this satisfactory arrangement whereby all three of his friends were happily married. And Peter Snooks was there, solemn and dignified, decorated with a gorgeous red, white and blue bow but indignant at this touch of feminin-

ity and resentful that he was not allowed to go up and stand with the bridal party. George Washington and the other servants were in the rear of the chapel.

After the ceremony they all trooped back again to Wavertree Hall where, on the lawn under a cluster of superb oak trees, where the stars and stripes were waving, a lunch was spread for their refreshment.

Cousin Nancy, aided by Mrs. Lennox, was the presiding genius of the feast, while Mr. Lennox, also, came to the front with jests and stories to relieve the solemnity of the past half hour.

Kenneth, radiantly happy and looking handsomer than ever in his uniform, was here, there and everywhere, but with always his first thought for Hester. She was unusually quiet—subdued by happiness and the thought of the parting so near at hand. It was Julie that day whose laugh was the merriest, but then Julie knew something which Hester did not.

In accordance with a tradition of Wavertree Hall Mrs. Driscoe had brewed a punch, a mild but delicious concoction famous at all the Fairleigh weddings.

Mr. Lennox proposed the health of the brides and then the bridegrooms. Dr. Ware toasted the mistress of Wavertree Hall. And so it went around from one to the other, until, having

cheered the President, the army, the navy and the flag, Dr. Ware excited the wildest enthusiasm by bowing low to Mrs. Driscoe and saying:

"We lived through other days in Virginia, you and I, Mrs. Driscoe. Three cheers now for a reunited country!"

How they did shout! There was not a dry eye among them. Then Jack's thin voice called out:

"Won't somebody please cheer for the boys that want to be soldiers and can't?" At which they all laughed and cheered again.

There were other people who had a secret that day besides Julie. Indeed they were all in it except Hester—in fact they knew much more about it than Julie herself, who only knew half. It had been arranged that Hester and Kenneth should drive with Julie and the Doctor to the station; then, as Hester supposed, she and Kenneth were to have an hour together before he took his departure. He had told her that he had left everything at camp ready to send on, so that it would not be necessary for him to return there.

She was a little surprised when they took such an affectionate farewell of her as well as Julie and before she got into the carriage Mr. Landor had asked her to step aside a moment with him.

"I shall be gone when you return," he said,

THE WEDDING BREAKFAST

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speaking with some difficulty, "and it is proper you should know that I approve of Kenneth's marriage. He talked at some length about you last night and it's a good thing—a good thing. I never had a daughter—"

Hester kissed him. Caleb Landor had not been kissed for thirty years.

"Kenneth belongs to us both," the girl said simply, "and we are both giving him up but it must be the hardest for you, because you have had him the longest."

"I don't know, I don't know," gruffly, to hide his emotion, "we can't go into that. I want you to take this," slipping something in her hand. "I hear your sister requested there should be no wedding gifts for her. Mrs. Lennox tells me that she asked those who wished to remember her to turn the money instead into the Red Cross Fund. No doubt you feel as she does. I understand you are much alike. If you will keep that paper and use it for the sick and wounded later—for we are bound to have them—as a gift from yourself, I shall be much obliged to you. No, don't thank me, say nothing about it. And remember that my house is open to you whenever you care to come." It is doubtful if Caleb Landor had ever made so long a speech in his life.

She did thank him, choking back her tears.

Then she thrust the paper in her pocket and later when she had a chance to examine it she found a check of a thousand dollars, made payable to her, Hester Dale Landor!

All the way to the station she roused herself and chatted gayly to make Julie's last moments with her a bright remembrance. Julie was so excited she could scarcely contain herself and in order to sit still was fairly rigid in her seat.

When they reached the station the train was not yet in sight but on a side track stood a car.

"What is that?" asked Julie curiously, as they left the carriage.

"That is yours," quietly answered Dr. Ware, watching the effect of his words.

"Mine? What *are* you talking about?"

"Come and see," cried the Doctor who felt like a boy of twenty.

She ran down the platform, stood still and trembled from head to foot.

"Hester," she gasped, turning with the old habit to her sister, "Hester, it is 'The Hustle!' "

"What!"

"It is, it is!"

Bridget with Peter Snooks in her arms was waving out the car window.

"Oh, Philip!" Julie cried. And without an-

other word he took her in his arms and carried her in the car.

"If the days to come here," he whispered as he put her down, "are as happy as the old ones, little wife, I shall be satisfied."

Hester and Kenneth, who had not known whether or not to follow were called peremptorily in and all exclaimed over by Bridget, who having been appointed by the Doctor a reception committee of one, felt this the proudest and happiest moment of her life.

"Now tell us all about it," said Julie, "but first I am going to make Hester as 'comfy as comfy can be.' You poor little thing, you are not going to lose Kenneth to-day. You are both coming South with us. We are going to do escort duty to the distinguished young officer, Lieutenant Landor."

"What!" exclaimed the bewildered Hester.

"We are all going down in 'The Hustle' together, Hester," explained Dr. Ware, while she was made to sit down, Kenneth tucking a cushion under her feet and Julie perching on the arm of her chair. "Julie did not know about 'The Hustle'—that was my surprise for her—but she did know that we meant to go West by the way of Tampa—we settled that last night after you heard from Kenneth—and have you and him go along with us so that we could all see the last of

him. Kenneth and the people at Wavertree Hall knew about it. I had to let Kenneth into my secret so he could send his things aboard. Bridget packed your trunks while you were at luncheon and got them off without your knowing it and here we all are, as snug as possible, with Bridget and Peter Snooks to keep us in order."

"Kenneth," said Hester with brimming eyes but in the old bantering tone which always made them laugh, "how dare you have secrets from your wife? How dare you! It's a perfectly scandalous beginning!"

"Please, you were not my wife then, and I won't any more," he said penitently. "Will you forgive me, please?"

"I don't understand how you did it," said Julie to her husband, who leaned over the back of the chair on the arm of which she was perching, his head on a level with hers.

"It was not difficult, dear. I had been on the track of 'The Hustle' for some time. I always intended to capture you all sometime and take you off for a vacation in her. That was one of my dreams, but I never mentioned it to certain little girls I knew for fear it would never come true. Early this spring I learned that the car had been relegated to a car shed on a Western road—it was not considered modern enough for

use. So I ordered it on to Radnor, had it overhauled and thought it would be an ideal place for a honeymoon, eh, little wife?"

"Oh! yes," she said shyly.

"And Hester," slipping his hand down over the chair and resting it on her shoulder, "it is your honeymoon, too, dear. I am so glad. And 'The Hustle' is yours as much as it is Julie's. Will you always remember that? Kenneth, old man," with a change of tone, "will you come with me and see that everything is aboard? I hear the train, which means that we shall be picked up and taken on in a few minutes."

Left to themselves, the girls, half-dazed by these astonishing events, wandered slowly about the dear old familiar car, which had suffered scarcely an alteration. Julie felt it was Dr. Ware's exquisite forethought which had kept the interior so nearly as they had left it. There was the piano at which she had so often played and sang for Daddy and the great leather chair drawn up close in which he had spent many a restful hour listening to her. Over the piano in its old place hung a portrait of her mother and at one end of the car, looking down benignly, hung their favorite picture of their father—the Major in full uniform with that spirited look of action which so distinguished him. Over the

picture were crossed two swords, his and the Doctor's; over these higher up was draped Old Glory hanging in splendid folds.

"Miss Nannie and Mr. Renshawe and Jack, they come over this mornin' an' fixed the flag an' all the flowers you see around everywheres. Jack said to tell you he done the swords. Didn't he get 'em up fine? They had a great time over here all unbeknownst to yez," explained Bridget.

The girls stood hand in hand before the picture. "Oh! Daddy," they whispered, "dear Daddy, help us to be worthy of all this!"

CHAPTER XXIV

THEY made the run to Tampa in two days. The transports were being loaded with ammunition, provisions and all the paraphernalia of war as they arrived and Kenneth went on board with the last detachment of Rough Riders.

Hester bore up like the brave little soldier she was. There was never a tear, though she clung at the last to Kenneth as if she could not let him go. That was for but a moment. The next she stood erect and smiling on the rear platform of "The Hustle" waving him off. The picture Kenneth carried away with him cheered all the hours of all the days to come. He had only to close his eyes to see a slender girlish figure with head thrown back and radiant, unflinching eyes smiling and smiling into his very heart. And all through the desperate fight before San Juan when the bullets hissed and all was deafening, blinding chaos, rang her last words, "Fight for your country and me—be as brave an officer as Daddy."

At the hotel at San Francisco, when our party reached there, was found an accumulation of

mail forwarded from Radnor for the Doctor. A letter from his sister was read and handed to Julie with a smile.

"MY DEAR PHILIP," it began:—"Your letter telling me of your engagement and probable speedy marriage to Julie Dale was no surprise to me. I had always known you were in love with her or you would never have been so idiotically approving of all the crazy things she did. I will say, though, that if you intended to marry you might have done worse. I understand from Mrs. Davis and Jessie, whom I saw last week in London (they have just been presented at Court) that the girls were recognized pretty generally by our set before they went away. Mrs. Lennox must have done some campaigning! However, people quickly forget things, and all that vulgar cooking may be regarded merely as the freakishness of two headstrong girls. I hope you will remember that she is headstrong and keep a tight rein over her. As your wife, of course her position in Radnor will be unimpeachable.

Now that you are to have a housekeeper I shall avail myself of invitations from English friends and remain here into the winter when I shall probably join Lord and Lady Wynne in a trip into Egypt. I may decide to make England my home. I prefer it to the States and should not under any circumstances think of returning while that tiresome war is going on.

The housekeeping keys are in my top bureau drawer, left hand end. Tell Julie I am most particular that the linen, especially that not in constant use, should be frequently aired, and the blankets must go down on the line in the yard once a week. There are other things which a flighty young person should know and which I shall write her at length later. I hope that dog is not to be allowed the freedom of the house. I shudder to think of it!

Affectionately, MARY."

Julie laughed gayly when she had finished.

"Poor Miss Ware!" she said, "she still regards us as monsters of iniquity. Am I a headstrong young thing?"

"Of course," quizzically. "Don't you feel the tight rein I hold over you?" taking her face in his hands.

For answer she kissed him, to the embarrassment of Bridget who had knocked unheard and entered the room at that moment.

Julie devoted herself to Hester these days and succeeded in keeping her busy and diverted. Hester's great wish had been to follow Kenneth to Cuba, but she allowed herself to be convinced both by him and the others that it would be an unwise thing to do. She knew no Spanish and nothing of nursing beyond the limited experience she had gained in caring for her father, and it was the season of yellow fever, to which, her vitality having been greatly exhausted by the strain of the previous winter, she would be dangerously susceptible. But the old wish to become a Red Cross nurse was more than ever strong within her and this desire they all encouraged and approved, feeling that if Kenneth were to be long in the field Hester's happiness would lie in being near him and administering to the sick and wounded men. So she plunged into Spanish with an excellent teacher in San Francisco while Dr. Ware brought her books on nurs-

ing, gave her practical talks on surgery and promised to get her into a training school for nurses as soon as they returned to Radnor at the end of July.

The newspapers were her solace and despair—they said so little and so much! With heads together she and Julie devoured them, reading every word. The newsboys' cry, "Extra, Extra!" filled her with apprehension. She had had but one letter from Kenneth, written as they were about to land with General Shafter at Baiquiri. Before there was time to hear again, the papers blazed with the news of the desperate attack on San Juan, and the Rough Riders became the heroes of the nation.

Hester, scanning the paper with wide eyes, searched for the list of dead and wounded. With beating heart her finger went down the line and stopped.

"Landor, Kenneth, Second Lieutenant, Troop —, Roosevelt's Rough Riders, wounded in the thigh."

She lived through the next ten days of suspense like a person in a dream. Her impulse had been to start immediately for Cuba, and Mr. Landor wrote that he was going down and would take her with them. But Dr. Ware, the far-seeing, advised them both to wait. News would soon come direct from Kenneth and it was prob-

able that he would be sent home on sick leave before they could get down to him. Seeing the wisdom of this, Mr. Landor wired Dr. Ware that he should wait. And Hester waited. Julie never left her. She buoyed her up night and day with the belief that Kenneth would not die.

The papers in their later and more detailed accounts of the attack and capture of San Juan, spoke in high praise of the daring bravery of Lieutenant Landor who had incited his men to the highest pitch of enthusiasm by his unflinching spirit, which carried everything before him. Later in the official report from General Shafter, Kenneth Landor, wounded before San Juan, was given honorable mention.

Then one day came to Hester a letter in an unknown hand. It was written from the field hospital and told Mrs. Landor that her husband was recovering; that the operation upon his thigh had been successful; that Mr. Landor's cable to send the Lieutenant home had been received and that already at headquarters arrangements were being made to get the wounded who could be moved aboard a transport off by the end of the week. That Landor himself knew nothing of all this, for he was too weak to be consulted, but he, the surgeon, assured her there was no cause for alarm and he hoped when Mr. Landor was safely home again she would get him well

and return him speedily—the troop could not afford to spare for long so gallant an officer.

Hester read this precious document until it was worn to shreds. And Julie and her husband took her back to Radnor as soon as the paper informed them that the transport had started.

Dr. Ware and Hester went together to the dock to meet him. Mr. Landor was too unnerved to leave the house and Julie remained with him, helping him through the tedious hours that intervened between the time when a clerk had telephoned from the office to the house that the transport was sighted down the harbor and the moment when the carriage stopped at the door.

They brought him into his father's house on a stretcher, Hester walking by his side, her hand in his. Weak and wan he was, but smiling, turning from one to the other with a hungry devouring gaze that made his father choke and leave the room.

What a home-coming that was! Very still, lest the invalid be excited, but very impressive, and always to be remembered by those who witnessed it; for hearts spoke through eyes what tongues dared not utter and a suppressed sense of exaltation mingled in their love.

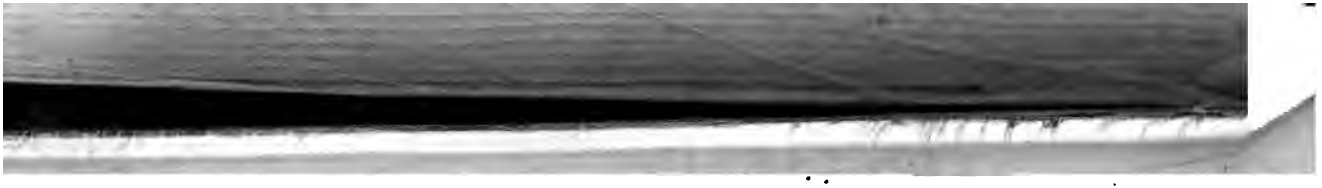
It is a very beautiful thing to have a hero in one's family. So at least thought the Dale girls,

even though it was a very refractory hero, who sometimes mutinied and always disavowed any claim to distinction whatever.

Under Dr. Ware's guidance, Hester and Bridget took care of him. He was home on a two-months' sick leave and hoped at the end of that time to rejoin his troop wherever they then might be; but Dr. Ware, though he said nothing, thought it extremely improbable that Kenneth would be sufficiently recovered to go into the field before October. By that time the war might be over. Who could tell?

Mr. Landor sat for hours at a time in the sick room listening quietly while Hester, close to the bed, read the papers to her soldier husband, who never took his eyes off her. And the father did much thinking at that time. His stern repellent nature was softening under the warmth of Hester's sunny presence and more than once she had looked up suddenly to find him gazing at them with misty eyes.

Jack came, too, satisfied to be permitted merely to gaze at his hero. Now and then, as a mark of high favor, Peter Snooks was allowed to lie on Kenneth's bed. The little rascal seemed to appreciate the privilege and kept very still, sometimes licking Kenneth's hand, as much as to say he knew how to behave in a sick room—had he not spent hours at a time with Major Dale?

Julie was in and out many times a day, doing a thousand little things for the comfort and happiness of the invalid. She and Hester were near neighbors, for the Landor mansion was but two doors down from Dr. Ware's on the water side of Crana Street.

And here in Radnor where they had fought and won so great a victory, "those Dale girls" began a new life.